"Where there is no vision the people perish"

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The POETRY REVIEW

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AND A MAGAZINE OF GENERAL
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The Poetry Review

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No More Nightingales?

THERE is nothing more, really, that can be said about nightingales. It has all been said before; beautifully, finally, and too often. When one hears them as I have heard them during the past month, singing in the moonlight, two or three together, memory begins its patter. Keats, of course; bits of Arnold:

"Hark, ah! the nightingale,
The tawny-throated:"

even from Eliot, that not so Old Master, Sweeney crops up again with those that

". . . sang within the bloody wood
When Agamemnon cried aloud . . ."

The phrases which the poets coined, thin and worn from circulation but still golden, chink in the pockets of the mind; and their jingle drowns the music.

One listens at such times to an author, not a bird; to the comment and not the cause. Reality itself seems inadequate, and a little disappointing. A nightingale is singing, a delightful song; it is April again and a fine evening: but is that enough? Can the frail structure of birdsong and moonlight bear such a weight of emotion? If you throw enough praise, some of it will stick, and this is already plastered with poetry and romance. One is on holy ground here, but too many bare feet have been padding over it.

Perhaps there should be another Index. Not, this time, of books that may not be read but of books that may not be written, pictures that may not be painted, leit-motifs perpetually taboo. No more nightingales, then; no more early violets and late sunsets; no more Madonnas; no more castanets and camel-bells. Away with the puppets and the stage-properties and the box of magic tricks! I was once in the Imperial Theatre at Brighton when a new musical comedy was produced with a starry caste: at the end, a voice from the gallery cried "Too old, too old! We've heard it all before." The remark has a wider application.

The younger artists are conscious of this problem. They are bored by the old symbols and formulae; for them so many topics have been exhausted. They long to be free from the old sentimentalities, platitudes and redundancies. The artist's life is a search for beauty, but in 1945 he comes late to the job. Others have been there before him; the stone has been rolled away. How lucky was Chaucer, writing in the youth of the English language! And Giotto, picking up his brush in the first years of the Renaissance! How fortunate were the Elizabethan song-writers, Byrd, Weelkes and the rest, to have the whole field of harmony before them! Such a creative opportunity has come, in our time, only to the inventors of the aeroplane.

How then is the modern artist to fulfil himself? Restless and dissatisfied he searches

for a new beauty, or at least for a new means to express the old. The search can have incongruous results. A primrose by the river's brim a yellow primrose cannot be to him, it must be something else. The cliche must be avoided at all costs, even at the cost of the truth it still contains. Young men would not, if they could (which is unlikely), write like Tennyson, paint like Gainsborough, or compose like Schubert. So rhyme and metre are abandoned, form loses its significance, and we are in for atonality. Art becomes increasingly subjective; and the new practitioners, averting their eyes from the hackneyed charms of the world, turn inward upon themselves with results that may be more novel but are often less pleasing.

These aesthetic researches and experiments, of course, have some rewards; the catalogue of beauty can never be closed. But to most of us the lovely and beloved things are familiar ones. If sometimes they seem less lovely because too familiar, that is a criticism not of them but of ourselves. It means we have lost our sense of wonder, and we would do well to renew it. Towards this nightingale, for instance, that I hear now. Amongst all the echoes and explanations of intrusive memory, I must recognise the miracle.

For it *is* a miracle that I should be here, now beside this wood, with this bird singing. The wood is on the edge of an R.A.F. operational station, and the roar of the bombers drowns the nightingale's song. To me, that is symbolic. The bombers are incomparably more powerful than the bird; but a nightingale was singing before they were built and will be singing long after they are forgotten. (Even now, if I strain my ears, I can hear him.) The weak and lovely, not the strong and brutal, survive. Evil and cruelty and ugliness succumb to Time: Beauty is imperishable, familiar because indestructible, however mighty the forces of destruction may be.

But the miracle is one not only of survival, but of presentation. I do not hear now the nightingale Keats heard; that were impossible though nightingales lived as long as parrots. Only at this moment in time has there been this special coincidence, the moon just so bright, the clouds thus arranged in the sky, the millions of may-bud, closed or open, and the same sequence of trills, roulades and high, clear, single notes projected through an air just so warm, so moist and so still. The Second Ballade of Chopin has been played many times, but when I hear it next it will be played as never before and as never again. Pater's "Mona Lisa" was different from mine; the light has changed in the room, the patina has thickened, and the friction of Time's finger has blurred, however slightly, the lines he saw.

But even if Pater stood with me before the canvas, or I with Keats beneath this tree, we should not see or hear alike. The ears of each of us, with their whorls and convolutions, are unlike all others; our eyes, intricate and delicate, are different from all other eyes. It follows then that every glimpse, every note of beauty is uniquely our own: it cannot be shared and it cannot be communicated. "We were the first that ever burst" into that region; none can have preceded us and none will follow us. We are there, alone, for that moment which, even to us, will never return.

So, listening to my nightingale, I will not complain. The chatter of the poets is irrelevant; they may enrich my experience, but they cannot trespass upon it. Many nightingales have sung since the world began; many more will sing through the centuries to come. This one sings now, and he sings to me. Let me listen!

Squadron-Leader, R.A.F., April 1945. *M. W. Palmer.*

The Consolation of Lucifer

"COME my little friend,"
Said the serpent to Adam,
"Let us sit down and talk together
Outside the garden."

How sordid and tame
With its fruit and flowers
It seems as we look back,
And the long gold hours

How empty of power
And thrill and alarm!
There day was brilliant
Here night is warm.

You who were indolent
Now you must toil
And what you love
You must learn to spoil.

I often think
Of a word I heard
It passed on the wind
Like a humming bird

It ran like water
Cool and free
And all of its sound was
"Love but me!"

Why with so many
Staring gems
To choose from,
Spoils and stratagems

And tricks of force
To make them ours
Should we love one only,
Have recourse

To suppliance
As the slender reed?
You have bone and sinew
And know your need.

And to play with angels
Like girls and boys!
You don't want these miserable
Childish joys.

You are grown up now,
Learn the strength
That lies in shoulder
And the arm's good length.

I will teach you how grasp
Is greater than reach
And the sinuous secret
Of two-fold speech.

All shall be yours
On the warm wet earth
But the mole's rest
And the sparrow's mirth.

For these dumb creatures
Driven from Eden
Think themselves near
As ever to Heaven.

I will make the beauty
Of earth your spoil
And what you love
You must learn to soil.

You must love your children
And teach them then
How to be heroes
And to kill other men.

For right is to seize
And the right of your hands
To make other gardens
And waste other's lands.

But Adam wept
And he scarcely heard,
And still he answered
Never a word.

T. W. Ramsey.

[The above poem and those by Marguerite Evans, C. E. J. Fryer, N. W. Gibbs, Phoebe Hesketh, Jean Kenward and C. Palmer, elsewhere in this issue, were highly commended by the Premium Editor in our last issue.—ED.]

O Bitter Speech

O BITTER speech
from such sweet lips
whereon the rose once bloomed,
and now all beauty there entombed
makes melancholy mock
of gentle love.

These words
like cruel envious swords
that cannot bear that heart should share
with heart, and share their once deep-felt felicity,
but strike and wound, nay strike and kill.
O desolating cruelty!

Nothing now may mend, nothing unsay:
This bitter speech shall slay.

Pádraig O'Horan.

Escape from Thought

SILVER slippered night is dancing
Wild abandoned on the water,
White within the moon.
Silent, fleeting feet are glancing
Gaily over moments later
Lost, and passing soon.

"Dance with me for time is flying,"
Sings her voice across the winter
Wastes of shimmered sea;
"Dance with me," her soft voice sighing
Bids my spirit now to enter
Into revelry.

Thought deserted, I am racing
Speedily to moonclad laughter
Loose in naked night;
Thought forgotten, I am facing
Fickle favours passing swifter
Than her laughter light.

Turning back to watch the weeping
Where my soul could rest no longer,
Old, I see her now,
Like a woman fragile, sleeping,
And still shining from her finger,
Golden is my vow.

John Gabbatiss.

The Rose of Loveliness

YOU are become the very rose and fortune
Of all that's lovely; delicate seeming star
Wrecking the night with silver shall importune
Yourself her watchman and her warrior.
Fine are the little fish under the stream
Flaunting their ribbons for the embracing tide
Yet are their limbs but as a drift, a dream
That in your beauty is personified.
The wise-lipped snail perpetually afraid
Marvellous nightingale, mimsy wren,
Are but your changing shadows, who are made
The very fibre and the flame of them;
And liberal Age shall, every sweet confessed,
Of all his loves count you the loveliest.

Jean Kenward.

The Witchen

THIS witch apple, rosy red,
Shining as a bead of blood,
I will plant above the hollow
Wind-deserted, where the swallow
Dipped beside us as we lay
Heart to heart one summer day.

Rosy bead, lie deep in earth—
Not still as she below green turf—
But sleep the cruel winter through
Until white March comes brave and true,
And like the fairy prince to break
Your frozen sleep for beauty's sake.
Here we picked the magic fruit,
And here she sleeps below the root,
And sleeps more gently than a seed—
Of sun and rain she has no need,
And of my tears she takes no heed.

Nor any gallant Spring can raise
Her loveliness for Summer's praise,
She said these berries wove a charm
To keep humanity from harm.
"Misfortune cannot fall," she said,
"With witchen leaves above our bed"—
Before the crimson harvest bled,
She smiled, and sighed, and left me here
Alone to face the empty year—
And in the desert now I weep
In banishment, while shadows keep

Her impenetrable sleep—
Her's now the dreams that will not break,
And mine the anguish wide-awake.

And yet I stand upon a deed
Imprisoned in a ruby seed—
For one day I will hear her voice
Where the winds and birds rejoice—
One day she will answer me
Whose dust will feed a witchen-tree.

Phoebe Hesketh.

In a Village Churchyard

O PEACEFUL host, and blest,
How full of grace you rest,
Beneath the shadow of your golden stones;
Where summer weaves, with beauty's rarest thread,
The sun's eternal pattern overhead,
And winter lays her ermine on your bones.

Warm ivy'd wall, that holds Death's continent,
Sweet, mellow, and familiar old bell;
I should be satisfied if you might tell
The measure of my years, when they are spent.

Yet, he who loved, as well, this quiet place,
And would have been content to lie, and proud,
Where early snowdrops thrust and tulips crowd,
Is dead upon the desert's arid space.

He sought no larger world than yours, yet lies
In that lost sand, where no bell tolls, nor wall
Encompasses, nor yew gives shade at all.
Make homely welcome, sires; he shares your paradise
Who may not share this earth he died to keep
Inviolate—this garden where you sleep.

M. Sheppard Fidler.

Vision Fugitive

IT was the Word, escaping like a rat
Along the unlit rafters of my mind;
I caught a glimpse of it and it was gone.
The wind goes to and fro, the ghost behind
My eye-strings whispers, but his words are blown
Beyond the dawn, beyond the deathless light.

John Preston, Wtr.

Convalescence Past

THE singing child no longer sings
from a couch where songs were few:
She's singing now from an apple-tree,
lithe limbs a-drip with dew.
She's climbed to where the blackbird sang
morning and evening hymn,
And hears the silver tide of youth
come calling, calling in.
Around are mountains greening down
to burns blue-lit by sky;
And blushing poppies in the gold
of ripened wheat and rye—
The tide of youth sings lustily,
comes romping, laughing in.

C. H. Harding.

Lines on "The Praying Hands" by Albrecht Dürer

STRONG hands, calm, cool, serene and sentient,
Hands of an artist, dreaming, delicate,
By a master-artist hand delineate:
Fingers unpassioned, tapered, eloquent—
Composed yet restless, eager, competent.
Imperious hands—unused to supplicate,
But to command: to Beauty dedicate.
Mystic, majestic, pure, mature and clement. . . .
Hands lifted up to the Eternal Hands—
Outstretched and pierced, from unbelief to fashion
Faith, all glorious—the Divine Compassion.
Hands bathed in contemplation, poet's hands,
Poised in pencilled prayer, prayer which shall not cease:
In your manual credo I have found my peace.

R. Garlick.

Love Lyric

(*From the Chinese*)

THE North Wind to-day
Is cold across the plain,
Its icy hands
Are tangling my hair,
It moans, like an old man
For a lost dream—
The air is heavy
With snow,
But your mouth on mine
Is warmer than Sun and Fire,
And sweeter
Than the unblown lotus
On the waters of Spring,
For you, my lord,
Have raised me
Above the temple,
And in the long moment
Of Love,
Crowned me with stars.

Marguerite Evans.

For Beatrice

LADY, the immortality of fame
You owe to him, who in his verse made good
The apotheosis of all womanhood
And summed up all perfection in your name.
From you the quickening inspiration came
Kindling his genius as no other could,
Although in life you never understood
How strong the fires were that you set aflame.

Yours was the influence which operated
And carried him through stellar spaces far
Into the Light, divine and uncreated.
For love of you he ventured to unbar
The doors of that dark realm, where relegated
The dead, the damned, the disregarded are.

Eric Fryer.

German Boy, 1938

AT fifteen, I remember him:
As he washed at the sink in shorts,
He chatted carelessly to me,
Half turning round with soapy skin,
With soapy, golden, freckled skin;
And from the naked kitchen bulb
Quite unaware he caught the light,
While naturally he cleaned himself,
Foot high and pensive in the bowl:
He was an ode to all that's gold,
To all that's sunburned, ripe and live,
To all that uncorrupted is,
Unconscious elegy of youth:
Does loving vision blind the sight?
Was he as wholesome as his skin?
Could beauty only give delight?
Did he love me as I did him?
For now he lies in Normandy
Though maybe "Never blows so red ——"
I see long fields of rustling corn
Where lies the glinting head.
Poetic vision blinds my sight!
Ripe fields of waving corn?
There dwelt within my kitchen bright,
In million kitchens that same night,
As on the cornfields' burnished height,
Grey masses of the dead.

Winifred Dawes.

Of the Moderns Without Contempt

IN a recently published correspondence the intelligibility and popularity of modern poetry have been vociferously discussed, and accusations of considerable ferocity have been made. For instance, phrases like "a great sham, a prodigious bubble and a naïve hoax" have been used. The particular writer who expressed this surprising mixture of denunciations spoke simply of "modern poetry," and so far as he is concerned, therefore, all modern poetry is a naïve hoax and every modern poet is a charlatan. It is indeed a sweeping statement, but, to make matters worse, no analysis of how modern poetry is a sham, a bubble and a hoax was offered: the statement stood alone in its thundering glibness. One remembers how Martyn Skinner described "much modern verse": "vomit, nonsense, or mere deep-sea ink."

If only this particular writer (or Martyn Skinner) were concerned, however, there would be no cause for any modern poet or any student of poetry to be alarmed. But he is not alone. Unfortunately, there are all too many like him to-day making similarly unsupported and vulgar attacks on modern poetry, and all too many idle readers prepared to enjoy the saucy manner in which their attacks are made, and to accept their crude statements as true.

As Henry Reed, a protagonist in the correspondence, observed, such attacks on contemporary poetry are not new: history shows that many an artist's work must wait, often until after his death, for a true public valuation of it. T. S. Eliot's and W. H. Auden's poetry, Louis MacNeice's and C. Day Lewis's, is not inevitably destined to be forgotten merely because it has some noisy enemies to-day; nor does the fact of its present mass unpopularity necessarily mean either that it is not poetry at all or that it will never become widely respected and influential.

But let us not ignore present facts. Our modern poets are not popular, any more than our modern musicians or painters; nor are they even politely spoken of by those who do not read them—and it is this latter fact which is both new and disturbing. The poet as a species has not often been an object of public esteem simply by virtue of being a poet, but at least he has not been abused and rejected as a madman, a hypocrite or a criminal. The public at large may for most of our history have regarded him as at best a harmless fellow, but still it has, almost instinctively, believed in his integrity and the integrity of those who have been so idle as to read his work. To-day, however, the term "modern poetry" has become synonymous in the public mind with such expressions as "meaningless doggerel," "cut-up prose" and "prodigious bubble." The publisher's blurb is careful to assure us that Julian Symons commands our attention because he is "one of the least obscure of modern poets"; Adam Fox in *English* (Spring 1943), writes: "the Moderns, of whom Mr. Eliot is the leader and main inspiration, are in process of being abandoned even by serious readers of poetry as too unintelligible and only faintly pleasurable"; and even so discreet a poet and critic as Edmund Blunden does not miss the opportunity to stoke up the fire on which the books of the Moderns must be burnt, when in *Cricket Country* he writes: "but the author had made his meaning sufficiently clear: I trust that this will not be too much against him at the present time." In short, to be a modern poet to-day is to be a literary pariah dog.

It cannot be denied that a considerable proportion of modern verse demands of its reader much concentration and re-reading, but no sincere student of the art of poetry

would consider such a demand in itself unjust; for poetry is not merely entertainment or even a form of recreation, it is an art—and art is not always easy either to create or to appreciate. It cannot be denied also that much modern verse is obscure, but much great poetry of the past is obscure in the sense that its subject-matter is uncommon, its imagery intricate and its vocabulary subtle (the love-poetry of Donne, for example). It cannot be denied that some modern verse is meaningless to a sufficient number of its serious readers to render its publication futile. It cannot be denied that some modern verse is not poetry at all. But to say these things is different from saying that all modern verse is obscure or meaningless or not poetry at all. For it is not the function of the critic to make glib generalisations, but to separate, analytically, the good from the bad, the genuine poem from the false verse or the "cut-up prose."

In the correspondence already mentioned, which originated from two articles written by Henry Reed on the subject of contemporary wartime poetry, Alun Lewis and Sidney Keyes, Stephen Spender and David Gascoyne were forced out of the discussion in favour of Rupert Brooke. It was argued that his popularity during the last war and the fact that a few of his lines are often quoted prove that he was a true poet who poetically expressed the general emotion of his day, whereas the modern poets of to-day are unreadable by any but a select few, and even they are as likely as not only pretending to understand.

It may be profitable, therefore, to restrict this present discussion to a comparison of two poems written during the last war with two written during the one just ended. Of the former pair one is notorious, the other is included in so popular a book as Methuen's *An Anthology of Modern Verse* (1921); both of the latter pair, written by modern as distinct from merely contemporary poets, young men one of whom has served in the Navy, have survived for a year or two already and so may receive the respect necessary for a responsible comparison.

The first of the former pair is Brooke's sonnet, "The Soldier," whose opening lines are known by rote by countless thousands of people who never open a book of poems:

> "If I should die, think only this of me:
> That there's some corner of a foreign field
> That is for ever England."

In *The Complete Poems of Rupert Brooke* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1932) a facsimile of the manuscript of this poem, which is in the British Museum, was printed. So soon after his death, therefore, the poet had acquired a fame irrelevant to his poetry. One of his manuscripts was already a museum-piece, its facsimile public property; his collected poems had become a conventional birthday-present, he himself the pilgrims' idol; "The Soldier" was the *pièce de résistance* of the Albert Hall festival and the school prize-giving ceremony. Did ever young poet achieve so soon such fame among the people? (Byron did not: in comparison with "The Soldier" his most popular poems reached but a small public.)

But let us look more closely at this sonnet. Is it so positively popular to-day? How long did its relevance last? Is it relevant to-day? Does it express the emotions of the young conscripts of 1939? On the assumption that it is the poet's business to give definitive, memorable expression to common feelings; on the assumption that he experiences more intensely than his fellow-men merely the same emotions; then it

may be agreed that in this sonnet Brooke did memorably express a common feeling. The majority of the young volunteers at the beginning of the last war did go to battle with a shout of exultation on their lips. They felt that they were bound for a great adventure in which they would prove the heroism of their manhood:

"Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage."

England was a vague but certain glory in their minds: they were Englishmen, the elect of God, and wherever they fell fighting would be "for ever England"; they, being English, were compounded of a dust richer than the dust of any "foreign field." So the poem became a second national anthem, and the war-hungry youth and all who, though also war-hungry, could only cheer them as they left for the front, caught their breaths with the excitement of its lines. It was the war-hymn of an hysterical nation, like the Horst Wessel song.

It was, then, a poem for an occasion, but limited to it and not able to stretch across time and have significance to another generation. For to-day, after another war, the young men, most of them conscripts in an impersonal war which they know was fought for other causes than national glory or individual adventure, do not feel that here is an expression of their own thoughts. They do not wish to spread the British Empire with their mortal remains; they do not consider their own bodies richer than the soil of France or Poland; they do not feel "blest by suns of home," but look back upon an England struggling to solve gigantic internal problems; they do not think of themselves as pulses in the eternal mind, for they are not certain that there is such a thing; "gentleness" no longer exists as an exceptionally English quality; there is no "English heaven." Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that the English soldier of to-day would scoff at the old-fashioned, adolescent sentimentalism of the poem and remind you that he has lived since 1918. He knows that 1918 was different from 1914. If he knows more of the poetry of the last war than this one poem he knows that men like Robert Nichols, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon succeeded Brooke, not to strike a romantic note, but the note of disenchantment which the slaughter and the suffering struck for themselves. In their poems he reads the reality of that war: that it was no boyish adventure but a bloody tragedy in which a man like Hoad "lay at length and brief and mad

"Flung out his cry of doom."

Gone already, so far as serious, sensitive men were concerned, was the subject of Brooke's sonnet: his temporary truth was already out of date: Rosenberg and Blunden, Owen and Sassoon were expressing the truth of war as those who fight in it have always known it.

There were subsidiary themes, of course: the heroism, the cheerfulness, the nostalgia, the glorification of the dead, the description of scene; but by 1918 this main truth of the war had been definitively expressed by poets, of whom Brooke, however, was not one. He had caught a passing fever, but he had not "learnt in suffering what he taught in song."

In itself "The Soldier" is a neatly constructed compromise between the Shakespearian and Miltonic sonnets. It is graceful, quiet, and not without dignity. There is

nothing artistically original in it, however, nothing that was modern even in 1914. It expressed in traditional style a primitive attitude of mind that had lain dormant for some years but had been given a sudden awakening and was not yet wide enough awake to be imaginative. It is a merely an occasional poem written by a youth lacking imagination and artistic originality.

The second poem of the last war is Robert Nichols's "Battery Moving Up to a New Position from Rest Camp: Dawn":

"Not a sign of life we rouse
In any square close-shuttered house
That flanks the road we amble down
Towards far trenches through the town.

The dark, snow-slushy, empty street . . .
Tingle of frost in brow and feet . . .
Horse-breath goes dimly up like smoke.
No sound but the smacking stroke

Of a sergeant who flings each arm
Out and across to keep him warm,
And the sudden splashing crack
Of ice-pools broken by our track.

More dark houses, yet no sign
Of life. . . . An axle's creak and whine . . .
The splash of hooves, the strain of trace . . .
Clatter: we cross the market-place. . . .

Deep quiet again, and on we lurch
Under the shadow of a church:
Its tower ascends, fog-wreathed and grim;
Within its aisles a light burns dim. . . .

When, marvellous! from overhead,
Like abrupt speech of one deemed dead,
Speech-moved by some Superior Will,
A bell tolls thrice and then is still.

And suddenly I know that now
The priest within, with shining brow,
Lifts high the small round of the Host.
The server's tinkling bell is lost

In clash of the greater overhead.
Peace like a wave descends, is spread,
While watch the peasants' reverent eyes . . .
The bell's boom trembles, hangs, and dies.

O people who bow down to see
The Miracle of Calvary,
The bitter and the glorious,
Bow down, bow down and pray for us.

Once more our anguished way we take
Toward our Golgotha, to make
For all our lovers sacrifice.
Again the troubled bell tolls thrice.

And slowly, slowly, lifted up
Dazzles the overflowing cup.
O worshipping, fond multitude,
Remember us too, and our blood.

Turn hearts to us as we go by,
Salute those about to die,
Plead for them, the deep bell toll:
Their sacrifice must soon be whole.

Entreat you for such hearts as break
With the premonitory ache
Of bodies, whose feet, hands and side,
Must soon be torn, pierced, crucified.

Sue for them and all of us
Who the world over suffer thus,
Who have scarce time for prayer indeed,
Who only march and die and bleed.

The town is left, the road leads on,
Bluely glaring in the sun,
Toward where in the sunrise gate
Death, honour, and fierce battle wait."

Here we are in the presence of an adult mind and an artist. As he describes the battery moving through the town the poet is conscious of his readers. He gives us precise detail. He is not concerned merely with lyricising an emotion in a hurry. We must wait for the message of the poem to develop. In the meantime all is quiet and dark, things happening in a kind of isolation—the tingle of frost, the dim breath of the horses' nostrils, a sergeant trying to keep warm, the cracking of ice-pools—the poet using a broken rhythm within the framework of the regular octo-syllabic line to create the scene for us. And then the bell tolls and we feel that the poem is about to tell us what we have already felt it must. There has been the certain breath of tragedy and pathos in this staccato description: we have known that this is no merely descriptive poem. And so, after the odd noises of axle, hoof and lurching bodies, "peace like a wave descends," and in the dark hushed town the column stops so that we may be made aware of what is really happening to it: it is moving into battle, and it is composed of men who must soon be slaughtered.

The poem is indisputably one of the best from the last war, moving, wrought from sincerity, written with full dignity by a serious adult poet who wished not to worship England or appeal to the ignorant chauvinism of the people, but to teach the fond multitude that what was happening "over there" was anguish, mutilation, death—these things first. Yet it too stands in contrast with any modern poem. For it was composed in no consciousness of poetic experiment, after no recent "poetic

revolution." Its quatrain had been a familiar form for a long time (Blake had used it frequently); its rhymes are mostly monosyllabic and, though honest and unobtrusive, in no way original or distinguished; and its later stanzas sound all the traditional chords of the nineteenth-century English lyric. There is no novelty of word, rhyme, metre or image at any point in it.

It was, moreover, written nearly thirty years ago in a different world. The killing and the destruction were perhaps much the same then as now, but the men who lurched through that town and the poet who was one of them were not the men of to-day. No modern war-poet calls upon his public to bow down and pray for him and his friends, for such prayer has small place in our modern war. The king may dedicate such-and-such a day as a national day of prayer, but most of us to-day consider it a silly idea which may yet have some sinister political motive.

So we have by now touched upon some of the numerous questions which, for a full understanding of the differing positions and attitudes of the poets of 1914–18 and the poets of to-day, must be asked and answered. Here we can do no more than select a few of these questions, for even standing alone as questions they indicate the directions in which we ought to think when we make comparisons.

We have to survey English poetry since 1914, but that cannot be satisfactorily done without considering still earlier poetry—in fact, all English poetry—and some foreign poetry, particularly French. We have then to ask in whose hands this poetry has been, and to what influences, moral, social, political, literary and technical it has been subjected. We have to study these influences themselves. Why, for instance, does the modern poet not feel it in him to call upon the people to worship England or to bow down and pray for the fighting men? What has happened to men that prayer has become meaningless? We have, too, to know how our war is different from the last: why the young men who fought in it have never felt as Brooke felt; what it was fought for; its vast implications; the effect it has already had on men. We have, in short, to study and analyse a crisis in Western civilisation and see how the war-poet can, let alone does, fit into the picture.

This is no small task, but it must be undertaken if we are to be honest with the modern poet and avoid the merely talkative rôle of so many contemporary critics. And when we have made this study and this analysis we shall have to return to the specific question of the literary and technical differences between modern poetry and the poetry of, say, twenty years ago. We must be literary critics as well as historians and philosophers. We must know what we mean by "poetry." We must know the functions of metre, rhyme, image, symbol and poetic figures of speech; the influence of poet on poet. We have to be students of the art of poetry. No less is honourable, and it is time that the critic should again be an artist himself. Perhaps never before in our history has public literary criticism been so curt and unscholarly. Like everything else it has become a victim of speed, and editors, reviewers and public seem to be content that several books should be discussed in a single short article and the last word upon them be pronounced in a few snappy sentences.

The first of the two modern poems with which we are concerned here is David Gascoyne's "A Wartime Dawn":

> "Dulled by the slow glare of the yellow bulb;
> As far from sleep still as at any hour

Since distant midnight; with a hollow skull
In which white vapours seem to reel
Among limp muddles of old thought; till eyes
Collapse into themselves like clams in mud. . . .
Hand paws the wall to reach the chilly switch;
Then nerve-shot darkness gradually shakes
Throughout the room. *Lie still.* . . . Limbs twitch;
Relapse to immobility's faint ache. And time
A while relaxes; space turns wholly black.

But deep in the velvet crater of the ear
A chirp of sound abruptly irritates.
A second, a third chirp; and then another far
Emphatic trill and chirrup shrills in answer; notes
From all directions round pluck at the strings
Of hearing, with frail finely-sharpened claws.
And in an instant, every wakened bird
Across surrounding miles of air
Outside, is sowing like a scintillating sand
Its throat's incessantly replenished store
Of tuneless singsong, timeless, aimless, blind.

Draw now with prickling hand the curtains back;
Unpin the blackout-cloth; let in
Grim crack-of-dawn's first glimmer through the glass.
All's yet half-sunk in Yesterday's stale death,
Obscurely still beneath a moist-tinged blank
Sky like the inside of a deaf-mute's mouth. . . .
Nearest within the window's sight, ash-pale
Against a cinder-coloured wall, the white
Pear-blossom hovers like a stare; rain-wet
The further house-tops weakly shine; and there
Beyond, hangs flaccidly a lone barrage-balloon.

An incommunicable desolation weighs
Like depths of stagnant water on this brink of day.
Long meditation without thought.—Until a breeze
From some pure Nowhere straying, stirs
A pang of poignant odour from the earth, an unheard sigh
Pregnant with sap's sweet tang and raw soil's fine
Aroma, smell of stone, and acrid breath
Of gravel puddles. While the brooding green
Of nearby gardens' grass and trees, the quiet flat
Blue leaves, the distant lilac mirages, are made
Clear by increasing daylight, and intensified.

Now head sinks into pillows in retreat
Before this morning's hovering advance;

(Behind loose lids, in sleep's warm porch, half hears
White hollow clink of bottles—dragging crunch
Of milk-cart wheels—and presently a snatch
Of windy whistling as the newsboy's bike winds near,
Distributing to neighbours' peaceful steps
Reports of last night's battles;) at last sleeps.
While early guns on Norway's bitter coast
Where faceless troops are landing, renew fire:
And one more day of War starts everywhere.
April 1940."

In considering this poem we are immediately faced with a difference between the civilian war-poet of the last war and his modern counterpart. For modern war-poetry has to deal with other things than the soldier and the fighting-line. During and for a short time after the last war the civilian poets had only two main themes: glorification of the dead soldier and reminding the public of his sacrifice. So Chesterton in his "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" and "The English Graves," Binyon in "For the Fallen," Walter de la Mare in "Peace":

"All is at peace. . . . But, never, heart, forget:
For this her youngest, best, and bravest died,
These bright dews once were mixed with blood."

But to-day the civilian poet has himself met the full tragedy of war without necessarily seeing a single German, for now the war is not only "over there," it is here in this quiet room. The alert has been sounded and the poet lies in his hotel bed looking at the "flowering wallpaper Which rings in wreathes above," and thinking what we have all thought:

"Yet supposing that a bomb should dive
Its nose through this bed, with me upon it?"

Thus in "Thoughts during an Air Raid," Stephen Spender records in modern idiom a common experience which has persisted for five years.

Similarly in "A Wartime Dawn" the poet has recorded in modern idiom the coming of dawn in this modern war to a modern town drooping beneath the weight of our modern faithless wonderment. He expresses his own adult meditative melancholy as he contemplates that present which he has elsewhere called a "bleak and rocky plain."

As he lies unable to sleep he is not a mere body nor are his thoughts on the war: he is a single individual experiencing his single state. Yet the description in lines 3 to 6 is impersonally real also. It is not a description of and for every man, for the poet does not write merely about every man or to him or to be understood by him (when he tries to, as Wordsworth tried, he fails); but by those who can assimilate it as it is offered the description by reason of its novelty is seen as an exact analysis. It will be meaningless only to those who are intellectually incapable of being taken by the poet through the experience.

Much great poetry cannot be understood and enjoyed by every man. However sensitive one is, however responsive to a simple lyric, unless one understands the words which the poet uses and has the knowledge to recognise his allusions and the intellectual capacity to grasp the points of his imagery, one cannot read much of

Shakespeare, Donne, Shelley or Yeats. Brooke's sonnet and Nichols's lyric make little demand on intellect or imagination, but Gascoyne's poem makes considerable demand on both—and so do "The Phoenix and the Turtle," "A Nocturnall upon St. Lucies Day," "Prometheus Unbound" and "The Tower." Are, then, all these also "meaningless doggerel" and "naïve hoaxes," deemed great nevertheless because they were written by Shakespeare, Donne, Shelley and Yeats?

Gradually in "A Wartime Dawn" the poet creates a full impression of the empty morning when every bird's twitter is aimless, an irritation, failing to console men in their search for a purpose. The birds still sing but the people in this modern town do not hear them as more than a tuneless singsong. It is one of the tragedies of our time. But morning has come at last, and no comfort with it. Like the consonants the first light is hard and unfriendly: "Grim crack-of-dawn's first glimmer." The pear-blossom is as vacant as a stare in its black environment; behind it the barrage-balloon signals its modern context. By now the impression is complete; and yet not complete. Reality is not so simple, nature is more varied than this and life is mysteriously rich even in nearby gardens. The morning hovers nearer and the world at war comes back. And with the return of normality—for the young war is already just that—the poet's anguish, our anguish, rests, rests at the very moment that the guns on "Norway's bitter coast" begin firing and troops, their faces blackened and their individuality lost, land on enemy soil. Only another day of war has come.

The poem's contemporary significance and the exactness of its commentary are made real by the modernity of its imagery set in the framework of the loose unrhymed pentameter, a form not new in English poetry (the Jacobean dramatists had used it) but one which modern poets have used extensively and to which they have given a new purpose. The imagery of Nichols's poem is external and decorative, photographic and commonplace; Gascoyne's is internal and analytical, each figure, each epithet emanating from the imagination and not addressed to it. The switch on the wall is "chilly," even so ordinary a thing is personalised as an extension of the poet's mood. The darkness is not "impenetrable" or "deep" or "dazzling" but "nerve-shot," for it is the poet's own darkness. The ear has a velvet crater; the notes of the birds are not merely heard, they pluck at the strings of hearing with claws; the sky has all the monstrous meaninglessness of a deaf-mute's mouth; the clink of the bottles is colourless, white. The later, external images are not romantic and traditional—church and bell and merely flower—for the modern poet needs objects more expressive of his message than those which, however original once, "having," in E. E. Cummings's words, like razor-blades,

> "been used and re-used
> to the mystical moment of dullness
> emphatically are
> Not To Be Resharpened. . . ."

The over-all effect of this poem is modern. One can analyse its vocabulary, imagery and form, and its purpose, to understand how, but if one reads poetry of all periods and types regularly one can feel its modernity spontaneously. No more than a single reading aloud is sufficient to demonstrate the difference of its tone and idiom from those of Nichols's poem. But that it is so different means neither that it is a better poem nor that it is a worse. To some of us an analysis of its content proves it to be the

better of the two, nevertheless, for although its effect may be no more intense and its sincerity no deeper, it is more skilfully and originally constructed, more exciting and rewarding.

The second modern war-poem to be considered here is Roy Fuller's "Spring 1942":

"Once as we were sitting by
The falling sun, the thickening air,
The chaplain came against the sky
And quietly took a vacant chair.

And under the tobacco smoke:
'Freedom,' he said, and 'Good' and 'Duty
We stared as though a savage spoke.
The scene took on a singular beauty.

And we made no reply to that
Obscure, remote communication,
But only stared at where the flat
Meadow dissolved in vegetation.

And thought: O sick, insatiable
And constant lust; O death, our future;
O revolution in the whole
Of human use of man and nature!"

This poem presents us with an interesting example of a modern poem in a comparatively traditional form. The slight variation on common metre is not new; the tetrameters are as regular as any enemy of *vers libre* could wish; and the rhymes are for the most part familiar, only in the last stanza showing that use of assonance with which modern poets have opened up vast new rhyming possibilities. There is little in the form, metre and rhyme, therefore, to distinguish the poem as modern, and yet its tone and idiom, its texture, are as modern as those of Gascoyne's poem or those of the poems of Henry Treece or George Barker. Without the subtle imagery and original description of "A Wartime Dawn," the poem is yet written in the modern conception and has a modern effect; for all its verbal and metrical simplicity (there is surely nothing unintelligible here), it is not classifiable with the traditional English quatrains of Herrick, Emily Brontë or A. E. Housman. Its music is different, its attitude is different. It is modern in its conversationalism (the first stanza), its suddenness of point (the last line of the second stanza), its linguistic intonation (the second line of the third stanza), and, above all, its precision of imagery (the third line of the first stanza) and its severity, a quality which comes to the fore in the last stanza.

The different attitude of the modern soldier poet to the war in which he fights is also seen here. Rupert Brooke would not be able to understand it, though Wilfred Owen would see in it the modern fulfilment of his own attitude. For there are more and other things to talk about now than the sacrifices and the glory of the dead, the wounds and the trenches, the front-line farm and the individual episode. There is no longer a fond multitude to call to. Instead, there is commentary on the context of the war and analysis of unprecedented wartime experiences, analysis which commands

new modes of expression, for when men speak of new things there is no pattern or predecessor to copy. So when the chaplain, himself quiet and sincere, speaks of "Freedom," his conscripted audience, which is conscripted to fight for whatever that word may mean, stares at him as though a savage spoke. His communication is remote and irrelevant. For this war is no old-time crusade; nobleness does not walk in our ways again. We have lived through the disillusion which Brooke did not know and we have learnt to expect nothing. We do not sing of honour; we do not ask men to remember us and our blood. We think of the insatiable lust that demands our blood and of this revolution in the whole of human use of man and nature, of this mystifying world in which we destroy and maim and burn and still men speak of freedom, good and duty, seemingly special men who play a specially articulate rôle, for ordinary men no longer speak of such things.

So from these two modern poems, both of which have already secured memorable places in the range of contemporary war-poetry, yet neither of which is known to the general public or is widely quoted, the essential newness of modern poetry can be assessed. The modern poet has set himself the task of writing a new poetry, new because its themes are new, new because new ideas of verse-making and imagery have been formed, new because he himself is new. Perhaps poetry is fundamentally always the same in origin, perhaps fundamentally man is invariable. But so far as revolution is possible, we are now living in the most widely dispersed and influential revolution in the history of Western civilisation. Man's conception of art no less than his conception of government has changed and still is changing. "All is flux, nothing is stationary." The very fact that the future of everything is so enigmatic is proof of this. In 1918 the most disenchanted man was on comparison certain of the future; but in 1940 we were what we still are, certain of nothing. In former times the individual poet could be the complete sceptic, as Byron was, but he had not to add to his own inability to foresee a future and expect answers to his questions the same inability in the whole of the civilisation in which he lived. This the modern poet has to do; or, rather, his own uncertainty is known in its roots to be only part of a universal uncertainty, and so it becomes of double intensity. It becomes, indeed, almost a new certainty, a new faith, and so there has to be a new poetry of this strange new faith. Individual poets of the past have anticipated it, but there cannot have been an age of it before. And so there exist to-day poets who are not modern—Masefield, for instance, Blunden and de la Mare. They are the new exceptions. It is not simply that they do not write in the modern style: they have lived in our time but remained comparatively exempt from its disintegrating influences. They do not share to the fullness of poetic feeling the modern disposition: what Auden has written in "For the Time Being" they have not experienced:

> "We are afraid
> Of pain but more afraid of silence; for no nightmare
> Of hostile objects could be as terrible as this Void."

So their poetry is different, belonging to an older order, expressed in an older idiom, quieter, less severe, less analytical, less subjective. They are our modern cavalier poets, still writing for a court which has by now been almost wholly destroyed. They may not wish to recognise the destruction, but it is real enough to other men who are already seeking to build a new and very different court. Time will show whether

it is ever to be built, and, if so, whether it will be a better one; but time takes time. The wise critic, the honest reader, will not be misled by the crowd which scrambles to throw up hasty temporary shelter for itself, crude little hovels, and will watch patiently the true artists at work on what may or may not one day be at least an annex both to the Hall of Fame and to that "very stately palace," the name of which is "Beautiful."

W. G. Bebbington.

Ode to Rhyme

(*After Sainte-Beuve*)

RHYME, you are like white swan's wings
Strong beatings;
With measured rise and fall you span
The distance from Mount Parnassus
Nebulous,
Euterpe's messenger to man.

Rhyme, you are the nautilus
Venturous,
That holds within its chambered shell
The haunting boom of distant seas—
Harmonies
That in the mind for ever dwell.

Rhyme, you are the moan of doves
In alcoves;
Rain song; and leaves soft whispering;
Wind whine and sigh; echoing bells
Peals and knells;
Night stars and dawn pearls glistening.

H. Broadberry Seaman.

Come Not

ACROSS the undelighting field,
When noon-blaze burns, oh, never pass,
Since naked feet more beauty yield,
Stealing the dew from morning grass.

Full-rounded though the moon arise,
Drowning in glory every star,
More magical Love's dreaming eyes,
Lit by the crescent's scimitar.

So, stranger to my present bliss,
Come not again, lest now you seem
Reality, and only this—
No more youth's rare, immortal dream.

Norah M. Gibbs.

The Poetry of Charles Morgan

THE brisk complacency with which many of us skip through or past the incidental poems in a novel devoted to literary characters is a kind of impoliteness. It betokens an unconsidered assumption that at such points in the narrative the author has not exerted himself to maintain his highest level of literary craftsmanship and throws in a verse or two merely to provide a background of verisimilitude rather than to prove the inspiration or sincerity of his protagonist. Too often this assumption is justified, but to consider it a general rule and act accordingly is to lose the fruit of many lucent moments and the pleasure of finding the author in another vein, not necessarily better, but often as good. If this is true of many novelists of indifferent merit it is doubly true of Charles Morgan.

No one who reads *Sparkenbroke* can fail to be impressed by it, and no one who is impressed can miss the heightened conviction it derives from the specimens of Piers's work scattered through its pages.

At the outset we come upon the defiant epitaph substituted by Sparkenbroke for the older rhymes above the entrance to his future tomb:

"Who mourns? A fool with mortal look
That dares to weep for Sparkenbroke?
Weep thine own exile: not my life.
With Earth for mother, Sleep for wife,
Here in the womb is winter spring.
Who stays? A Fool. Who knocks? A King."

Here, in lines which have much more than neatness, we receive not only an introduction to the author as poet, but also a crystallisation of Sparkenbroke's metaphysical attitude, his positive view of death as a re-entry into a continuous reality from which birth and a sensuous existence are a divagation. Here is triumph in anticipation as opposed to the smooth melancholy of the alternative poem of pity:

"We also moved as thou dost move,
With pride of youth and quick in love.
Have pity then, who drawest near,
That love and youth are ended here.
Though in sweet April thou dost shine,
December waits for thee and thine.

The obsession that death must be a kind of ecstasy transcending all other elations is put for us in another way in the brief quatrain of "The Caged Bird":

"Last night I flew into the tree of death;
An outer wind did me sustain;
And I, from feathered poppet on its swing,
Wrapt in my element, was bird again."

With the consummation of the ecstasy must come a sensation of rest and peace, but quietude is only preparatory to a fresh ecstasy:

"Here is my world: I must live in it, having no other place.
As a man, when night comes, turns inward to his home,
So would I draw my curtains and be at rest
Until in the new day I am cast upon thy morning;
But the curtain of this flesh has not dark to exclude thee.
Thy beam is the shaft of an eye, my candle dips and surrenders;

My house is not my house when thou art in it
My house . . ."

In another mood the poet inscribes verses to a woman from whom he draws inspiration. Their manner is that of the seventeenth century, the theme light but the touch delicate and easy:

"Let not a dream possess thine eyes,
Know that my song is all of me;
But if thy dream in anguish dies,
What I have taken—all of thee."

The happily included translation of Catullus's "Iucundum mea, vita, mihi proponis amorem" is similar in spirit although it touches a different chord—the endurance of love's promise—and has some of the stuff of Shakespeare's sonnets in it:

"You that are my life have promised love
Joyful and deathless. God, let it be true!
Let it be said in knowledge of her heart.
So against time may yet sufficient prove
This timeless pledge of loving constancy."

Piercingly grand is the opening of the lines wherein Piers acknowledges the miracle of Mary's intuitive knowledge of what is wanting in his poem on the Holy Face, its surprise, "like a cry in a silent house that awakens suddenly all the corridors of imagination":

"How like a movement in a still house beauty is,
Stirring in him that hears it a dark tremor of fear and wonder,
As in Adam that heard God's voice and cried: 'I am here.
Return me into thyself, O God, who, creating, forsook me.
Let me be in thee whence I came. Here I am alone.
The Woman is strange to me; and none may be alone but God.' "

Here, also, is an elaboration of the idea, always recurrent in Charles Morgan's work, that the greatest moments in the life of the artist are those in which he sees and understands what he has to do—not its accomplishment in words or paint or stone.

Intense introspection, tempered by a sensitive lyricism, is characteristic of most of this poetry, reaching its finest statement in the poem which breaks through Piers's efforts to resume his "Tristan" after a fresh defeat in his struggle to achieve composed renunciation of Mary:

"Be in suspense, inquiring, glassy mind,
And like a window flung let in the air.
To-night my spirit waits
Tiptoe and would be gone
To light original, not of the moon
Or sun, but more familiar, that once
Dissolved the petty barrier of this eye,
And down the rings of being
Its endless glow outspread.

Starred as the night beyond my dazzled pane—
Which, for a candle, Orion shuts out—

My expectation flows:
Now leaps, now quickens to a final rhythm
And throb of stillness at the core of fever
Where I from what I am
Is not to be distinguished,
Nor anything but love.

If time should break, then Orion must enter
And this candle, in death, go out . . ."

In another moment of self-abnegation the poetry of passion reaches a psalm-like quality of rhythm and diction:

"What am I but dust, light in the palm of her hand?
She retains me, she pours me out.
With curve of her body, she encompasses me and exalts me
Then sleeps, like a child, like an animal, like God,
And I am dust, floated upon her breath."

Piers's returning agony of irresolution and despair at his own inability to resign himself either to conformity or to self-determination is hammered out yet again in the abrupt but surging metre of

"Now in the despair of love, that windowless prison
I bend all night to my sleep, and my sleep denies me.
Rigid, naked, faceless, my sleep stares up at me
And cries: 'O fool of love! Be still, desire not.
Thou art in the trap of love: thine own cry awakens thee,
And shall awaken thee until thou goest down to the tomb.' "

At last, at long last, a decision *is* reached and Piers writes his final verses summing the recognition of his undeniable need of this one woman in whom he feels himself a liberated being with natural energy into all created things, gaining at once security and flight.

"If I have thee, it is to lock thy face
In visionary masks, and gain thereon,
Until this ecstasy acquire the grace,
If but an hour, of contemplation."

Perhaps it is only when the poems are gathered together apart that it is possible to realise what jewels of love, torment and happiness are thus inset in the long, jealous craftsmanship of the prose and what care has gone to their shaping. They stand on their own merit as expressions of seeking and desire ennobled by an undercurrent of mysticism which has in it something of Wordsworth and Shelley, more perhaps of Dante.

It may be adverted that poems such as these, produced with a secondary motive, must lose something of true greatness because of apparent insincerity, since the author is writing poetry, not for himself but for his imagined character, and the sentiments and beliefs are second-hand. No doubt this is often so, but I do not believe it is true of these poems, although I am aware that to say so is to state a corollary to the hypothesis that Piers is very much Charles Morgan, and this is not to be substantiated without a thorough, and therefore prolonged, study of all his works,

especially of "Reflections in a Mirror." All theory aside, these verses remain a very considerable achievement.

In *The Voyage* we do not find detailed quotation of the varied songs and poems which are the stock-in-trade of Therese Despreux. Obliquely, enough is said of them and their origins to show that Morgan knows of what stuff such verses should be: one senses that he is aware the provision of them is not his metier. As is not seldom the case with other writers he can produce one of a kind which is all but perfect, but not to be repeated because it is conceived in a moment of sheer inspiration stimulated by the novelty of the task.

The first verses given by Barbet to Therese are of this nature—some of them, as Barbet says, not verses at all but just things that come into the head with a tune attached:

"I have two oars in my hands.
Why do I feel that I must be fair to them,
as if they were alive?

I said a stupid thing. I wish I could unsay it.
But you alone can unsay it
by not remembering my foolishness
when you remember me.

Now I shall lie down but I shan't fall asleep haphazard.
I shall watch myself falling asleep; then I shall sleep well.
I shall watch myself falling asleep, like a bright coin twisting
through clear water until it is a gleam and disappears.

If the shape of these lines owes anything to the example of Whitman or Carpenter, or to any theory of metrical construction founded on the practice of Hopkins, they show no imitative shoddiness in what they say. As befits the nature of Barbet, something they have of a child's first efforts in poetry-making, but of such, still, is the kingdom of poetry. They make, indeed, as Therese exclaims, a song to end a programme.

More formal in outline, but not less singular in content, is the stanza of Templeraud's song, gay, mock-melancholy, with its flagrant touch of "stage" in the sudden twist of the last two lines:

"Stay at table till I've finished
Unless thou art the angel of Death.
None but he shall steal my pleasure,
None but he shall stop my breath.
Do not forsake this moment
For the doubtful years to come;
Who looks beyond this instant
Enters his tomb—
Do not applaud my singing
Till I myself am dumb."

Does the secret of Charles Morgan's effectiveness as a poet lie in the remarks made, in this same work, on the art of the diseuse and on poetry? Clowns, says Plence, in an argument with Cugnot, are bound by tradition and actors by conventions which

are a necessary code between actor and audience. For them, unlike painters and poets, there is no posterity—no daring and waiting for acknowledgment and acceptance. The poet, at the same time, cannot entirely escape the past and is held by it as by heredity. In a hundred forms of verse a perceptible general convention governs all—that which tells the hearer it is not prose and enables the listener to make an adjustment to the intensity of poetry. The modern poet, says Cugnot, wants to march ceremoniously into exile—but cannot. "The most he can do is to move house into a different part of the country from that in which Corneille lived: still he remains in the same kingdom with him." Is not this what Charles Morgan does? There is little in his verse worth the name of anarchy or rebellion, but in the newness and freshness of it he has moved house indeed.

Morgan's grateful acceptance of and passionate satisfaction with things French are the roots out of which *The Voyage* grew as a tribute. As it was completed in June 1940 the loved country was being engulfed by powers of such darkness that the light of all tradition and nobility and hope seemed certain to be extinguished. Morgan could not be expected to believe in such a destiny. "To-night, the eve of midsummer, there will be no bonfires on the hills of Charente, but, though dark ages intervene, they will be relighted, for France is an idea necessary to civilisation and will live again when tyranny is spent."

The same belief is restated at length and not without quiet magnificence in the only long poem of Charles Morgan's to be published separately—the *Ode to France* of September 1942. It casts the same shadow of mourning over evil days and limits it with the same fringe of faith and constancy:

> "Thou art the wisdom, O France, within all knowledge,
> The salt of delight. Who dies for thee
> Dies for mankind's perpetual redemption;
> And none can live in thee
> That has not died the death of saints and lovers
> And been raised up, in hate and holiness,
> To beat down Satan under thy feet."

This work is something altogether apart from the incidental verse already noticed and contains an excellence which increases with repeated reading. As a poem written for a particular occasion, by one exceptionally fitted, among Englishmen, by temperament and experience, to shape it, it stands out as an expression of a realisation and a desire unspoken among so many, a crowning achievement for one who has never advertised himself as a poet and received little recognition as such.

October 1945. ANEURIN RHYS.

SENORITA GABRIELA MISTRAL, the Chilean poetess, has been awarded the Nobel 1945 literature prize. She is the first Latin-American to have won it. She is also the first Latin-American woman to enter the diplomatic service. She was Chilean Consul at Naples, Madrid, and Oporto before taking up a similar post at Rio de Janeiro, where she has been since 1940.

MISS MAGGIE JORDAN, a former millworker in Yorkshire, who has spent eight years in Russia, reports that one group of peasants gave her a copy of the works of Burns, in Russian, the Scots poet being to them second only to Pushkin.

The Poetic Valentine

ONE of the earliest and most important customs of the Valentine Festival, itself dating in origin to the rites of the Lupercalia held in ancient Rome, was the writing of apposite poems and verse. This was true, particularly, of the more cultured classes, who made use of the theme for expression in poetry, and in so doing they preserved the charm and distinction of the day. But when the poets withheld their loyalty, this nobler conception fell into decadence.

There are many poems and verses that offer delightful sketches to illustrate the various customs, such as this from the Westminster Drollery of 1672:

"A fair of love we kept awhile,
She for each word I said
Gave me two smiles, and for each smile
I her two kisses paid.
The violet made haste to appear
To be her bosom guest,
With first primrose that grew this year
I purchas'd from her breast;
To me,
Gave she,
Her golden lock for mine;
My ring of jet,
For her bracelet,
I gave my Valentine."

But they are not, of necessity, literary valentines. To be counted as such, a poem is taken, for as far as it is known, to have been written and sent as a valentine, either on the eve or day of February 14th, which at the same time distinguishes it from the love song. The function of the literary valentine may be described, perhaps, in these words which were printed in a number of *London Society* for 1867, as of "awakening a conviction of the reality of love, and the existence of constancy, to arouse curiosity; to bespeak interest; to originate a play of sentiment and an attitude of mind favourable to reciprocity."

The earlier writing of valentine verse coincided and played its rôle in the ideals of chivalry current in the Europe of the Middle Ages, and it is to that period we must turn for the first recorded collection of such poems. Charles, Duke of Orleans, born on November 24, 1394, as son to Louis d'Orleans and Valentine of Milan, became one of the eminent and cultured princes of his day. Taken prisoner at Agincourt in 1415, he was conveyed to the Tower of London and kept in custody there for twenty-six years. It was during these years that he wrote his sixty valentine poems, preserved now in manuscript in the British Museum.

The greater number of the poems are in the native French tongue, a few in Latin, and some in Chaucerian English which he mastered whilst in this country; the English poems generally inclining to the melancholy, as compared with the lighter-hearted gallantry of the French. These for the most part were written in rondeau form, between 1436–1456. In the English poem, "Ballade 89," from which the following verses are taken, the poet laments the cold indifference with which his love is received, and pleads with his valentine to change her mood.

"O good swet hert my ioy and soul plesaunce,
Which y most drede and love as y best kan
And lo thist were to doon yow displesaunce
Ne were it so lo that y stond the man
The which that hath fro tyme syn y began
Endewrid more than y kan say of payne
As shewith bi my colour pale and wan
That giltless sleth me yowre disdayne.

* * *

Fayre valentyne remembre on yowre hest
Lete me not fynde yowre word and thouzt as twayne
If y myssay me pardone at the lest
For evyn giltles me sleth yowre disdayne."

In the French rondeau d'Orleans sings of the honours to be paid to St. Valentine at his festival, and particularly in the making of valentine poems.

RONDEAU CCXLVIII

"A ce jour de saint Valentin,
Venez avant, nouveaux faiseurs,
Faietes de plaisirs ou douleurs.
Rymes en françoys ou latin.

Ne dormez pas trop au matin,
Pensez a garder voz honneurs.
A ce jour (de Saint Valentin,
Venez avant, nouveux faiseurs.)

Heur et Maleur sont en hutin,
Pour donner pers, cy et ailleurs;
Autant aux maindres qu'aux greigneurs
Veullent deppartir leur butin,
A ce jour (de Saint Valentin).

But as an interesting part of the Gower manuscript, and included amongst the Cinkante Balades by John Gower, are two valentine poems which he wrote, probably when quite a young man in about 1350. In each, the poet speaks of the dateless customary belief that on St. Valentine's day the birds first meet to choose their mates, and he asks his love, to whom he refers in the first poem as "ma belle oisel" to emulate their example.

"Saint Valentin l'amour et la nature
De toutz oiseals ad en governement,"

* * *

"Ma doulce dame, ensi jeo vous assure
Que jeo vous ci eslieu semblablement;
Sur toutes autres estes a dessore
De mon amour si tresentierement."

* * *

"Ma belle oisel, vers qui mon pensement
S'en vole escript car jeo sai voirement
U li coers est, le corps falt obeir."

As a contemporary, however, of Charles d'Orleans in England, and as illustrating quite a different conception of the valentine festival, namely, that of the religious obligation, John Lydgate, the poet and monk of Bury, wrote his long "Valentine to Her that Excellith All," in honour of Queen Catherine, consort of Henry V. At the beginning Lydgate describes it as being "in wyse of chesing loves at Saint Valentynes day," and opens with the lines:

"Seynte Valentine, of custom yeare by yeare
Men have an asuance in the religioun,
To looke and serche Cupydes Kalundere,
And cheese bthyre choys thy gret affeccioun;"

He then compares the names of women in past history, praised for their beauty and virtue, such as Lucrece, Dydo, Rachel, Bathshea, Esther, and Penelope, but terminates each verse with the words that the one he loves best "excellith alle." In the eleventh verse, he writes of this love as being Mary, the mother of Jesus:

"And if I shal hir name specyfye,
that folk may wot whiche shee sholde be,
this goodely fressche called is Marye,
A braunche of kynges, that sprange out of Iesse,
that made the lord thorughe hir humylyte
To let his golddewe into hir brest doune falle,
To bere the fruyt which should saue us alle."

which he supports by seven verses of praise, speaking of the Virgin as:

"Sheo was cheef roote of oure saluacyoun,
that first for man the helthe gan pourchace,
Whane Gabryell with salutacyoun,
Gane frome the lord hir salue in the place.

* * *

Whame I loue best, for sheo excellethe alle."

In verses written for "A Kalendere" for February, the manuscript of which is now in the possession of the Bodleian Library, Lydgate speaks of the Lord Himself as His true love or valentyne:

VERSE 9:

"O true valeyntyne is our lord to me,
Al his body on the crosse he spredde,
And for that my soule his spouse shuld be."

A little more than a century later, it is the Court of Queen Mary Stuart that gives us the next poems in sequence, and they follow as an expression of a world, with its intrigues and tragedies, in direct contrast to the quietude of Lydgate's monasticism. George Buchanan, as the royal tutor, wrote eight valentine poems in Latin to two of the Maids of Honour, Mary Fleming and Mary Beton, and used and sent them as valentines probably between the years 1562–1566. They were first printed in 1628, and translated into English by Robert Monteith in 1708. The poem quoted here is

one of the shorter in the series, and as the lines speak for themselves, it was written for Mary Fleming.

"Receive what Fruits, the Year affords, in prime,
O Fleeming, Flow'r and Beauty of thy Time;
Not to adorn thy Head, these Gifts I send;
No outward thing thy Beauty can commend:
Only believe: the Spring, in best Aray
Compar'd with thee is nothing but Decay."

Translation by Robert Monteith.

As may be expected, the Elizabethan and Carolingian years offer a number of tuneful addresses, and we can sing with Ophelia,

"Goodmorrow! 'tis St. Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your valentine!"

and with Herrick, in his gentle upbraiding, which is surely one of the most charming little poems in the extant of valentine literature:

"Choose me your valentine:
Next let us marry;
Love to the death will pine;
If we long tarry.

Promise, and keep your vows,
Or vow ye never;
Love's doctrine disavows
Troth breakers ever.

You have broke promise twice,
Dear, to undo me;
If you prove faithless thrice,
None then will woo thee."

And again, with Dr. Lancelot Andrewes, of the simple fragrance of the English countryside:

"Come, be my Valentine!
I'll gather eglantine (sweetbriar)
Cowslips and sops-in-wine (Dianthus cargo-phyllus)
With fragrant roses,
Down by thy Phillis sit,
She will white lilies get,
And daffandillies fit
To make thee posies.

I have a milk-white lamb,
New taken from the dam,
It comes where'er I am

When I call 'Willy.'
I have a wanton kid
Under my apron hid,
A colt that ne'er was rid,
A pretty filly.

I bear a sign of love
A sparrow in my glove,
And in my breast a dove,
This shall be all thine:
Besides of sheep a flock,
Which yieldeth many a lock,
And this shall be thy stock:
Come, be my Valentine!"

(*Phillis Inamorata.*)

Such names as George Turberville and Henry King, Bishop of Chichester, Michael Drayton, Robert Heath, and James Howell with many others, come naturally to mind, of which the first two verses from Howell's poem, "Upon a Beautiful Valentine," written in 1664, may stand as example:

"Could I charm the Queen of Loves
To lend a quill of her white doves,
Or one of Cupid's pointed wings,
Dipt in the fair Castalian springs:
Then would I write the all divine
Perfections of my Valentine.

As 'mongst all flowers the rose excels,
As amber 'mongst the fragrant'st smells,
As 'mongst all minerals the gold,
As marble 'mongst the finest mold,
As diamonds 'mongst jewels bright,
As Cynthia 'mongst the lesser light:
So 'mong the Northern beauties shine,
So far excels my Valentine."

The writing of valentine poems was still widespread during the greater part of the eighteenth century. In theme and manner they varied from classical setting and allusion to expressions of a purely domestic nature. Thus Parrat in 1758 wrote his "Ode to Cupid on Valentine's Day," in which he invites Cupid to leave for awhile the isles of Greece, and to hasten to these shores, so as to inspire his valentine to come to Hymen's altar:

"Come, thou rosy dimpled boy,
Source of ev'ry heart-felt joy,
Leave the blissful bow'rs awhile,
Paphos, the Cyprian isle;

* * *

Haste to Sylvia, haste away,
This is thine, and Hymen's day;

But her for Love's rites prepare,
Let the nymphs with many a flow'r,
Deck the sacred nuptial bow'r;
Thither lead the lovely fair,
And let Hymen too be there,
This is thine, and Hymen's day."

* * *

But towards the end of the century, and as the paper valentine came gradually into use, the first indications of the decline of the literary valentine became apparent. With the exception of the few, they herald a period of degenerate verse for the popular valentine, of which James Hurdis wrote in "The Village Curate":

"The day Saint Valentine,
When maids are brisk, and at the break of day
Start up and turn their pillows curious all
To know what happy swain the fates provide
A mate for life. Then follows thick discharge
Of true-love knots and sonnets nicely penned,
But to the learned critics eye no verse,
But prose distracted."

Little can be said for the home-written valentine poems, and still less for those that were printed by paid rhymesters, and offered for sale in small booklets called *Valentine Writers*. Their commercialism caused the final downfall of the literary valentine.

There are, however, a few charming examples by some of the poets of the nineteenth century. In his early youth, Winthrop Mackworth Praed wrote several valentine poems, and later in 1826, his delightful "Song for the Fourteenth of February," described as being by a General Lover.

"Apollo has peeped through the shutters,
And awakened the witty and fair;
The boarding-school belles in a flutter,
The two-penny post's in despair;
The breath of the morning is flinging
A magic on blossom on spray,
And cockneys and sparrows are singing
In chorus on Valentine's Day.

Away with ye, dreams of disaster,
Away with ye visions of law,
Of cases I never shall master,
Of pleadings I never shall draw!

* * *

I think not of Laura the witty;
For, oh! she is married at York!
I sigh not for Rose of the City
For, oh! she is buried at Cork!

* * *

Like a wreck that is drifting to harbour,
I come to thee, Lady, at last:"

* * *

As coming from an older mind, with its attendant pensiveness and strain of melancholy, comes this lovely sonnet by Southey, being one of two which the poet wrote as valentines:

"Go, Valentine, and tell that lovely maid
Whom fancy still will prolong to my sight,
How here I linger in the sullen shade
This dreary gloom of dull monastic night;
Say, that from every joy of life remote
At evening's closing hour to quit the throng,
Listening in solitude to the ring-dove's note,
Who pours like me her solitary song!
Say, that her absence calls the sorrowing sigh;
Say, that of all her charms I love to speak,
In fancy feel the magic of her eye,
In fancy view the smile illumine her cheek,
Court the lone hour when silence stills the grove,
And leave the sigh of memory and of love."

In 1830 Thomas Hood wrote his poem, "For the 14th of February," in which he compared the power of his Valentine's charms, with that of the sun in nature.

* * *

"Rather thou knowest I would still outrun
All calendars with Love's,—whose date alway
Thy bright eyes govern better than the Sun,
Forthwith thy favour was my life begun;
And still I reckon from smiles to smiles,
And not by summers, . . ."

And later Edgar Allan Poe combined the addresses of gallantry with that of an attractive pastime for the beloved, by working her name into the fabric of the verse. It can be found only by taking the first letter of the first line, in connection with the second letter of the second line, the third letter of the third line, and so on to the end, as it shall be left for those to unravel who would care for a few minutes to join in the games of the Victorian drawing-room.

"For her this rhyme is penned, whose luminous eyes,
Brightly expressive as the twins of Leda,
Shall find her own sweet name that nestling lies
Upon the page, enwrapped from every reader.
Search narrowly the lines!—They hold a treasure
Divine—a talisman—an amulet
That must be worn at heart. Search well the measure—
The words—the syllables! Do not forget
The trivialest point, or you may lose your labour!

And yet there is in this no Gordian knot
Which one might not undo without a sabre,
If one could merely comprehend the plot.
Enwritten upon the leaf where now are peering
Eyes! scintillating soul, there lies perdus
Three elegant words oft uttered in the hearing
Of poets, by poets—as the name is a poet's, too,
Its letters, although naturally lying—
Like the Knight Pinto—Mendez Ferdinando,
Shall form a synonym for Truth. Cease trying!
You will not read the riddle, though you do the best you can."

Lord Macaulay made a custom of writing valentine poems for his nieces, the Trevelyans, and for other child friends, until, in his mind, they were too old to care for such verses. He pretended, usually, to have copied them from a book in the library, and said that they were by a "Judicious Poet," looking upon them in modesty, though falsely, as being on a level with the bellman's verses. In his "Valentine to the Honourable Mary C. Stanhope," daughter of Lord and Lady Mahon, Macaulay gives several charming vignettes of contemporary life.

* * *

"Bent double by huge bales of song,
Where, rich with many a gorgeous dye,
Blazes all Cupid's heraldry—
Myrtles and roses, doves and sparrows,
Love-knots and altars, lamps and arrows.

* * *

Prophetic rage my bosom swells—
I taste the cake—I hear the bells!
From Conduit Street the close array
Of chariots barricades the way
To where I see, with outstretch'd hand,
Majestic, thy great kinsmen* stand
And half unbend his brow of pride,
As welcoming so fair a bride.
Gay favours, thick as flakes of snow,
Brighten St. George's portico:
Within I see the chancel's pale,
The orange flowers, the Brussels veil.

* * *

All good attend my Valentine!"

The curtain goes down on the literary valentine, with the perfect scene set by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, in his poem "St. Valentine's Day," written in 1881. It is filled with the very breath of spring.

* Statue of Mr. Pitt in Hanover Square.

"To-day, all day, I rode upon the down,
With hounds and horsemen, a brave company,
On this side in its glory lay the sea,
On that the Sussex weald a sea of brown.
The wind was light, and brightly the sun shone,
And still we galloped on from gorse to gorse,
And once, when checked, a thrush sang, and my horse
Pricked his quick ears as to a sound unknown
I knew the Spring was come. I knew it even
Better than all by this, that through my chase
In bush and stone and hill and sea and heaven
I seemed to see and follow still your face.
Your face my quarry was. For it I rode
My horse a thing of wings, myself a god."

FRANCES PAUL.

[From a chapter in the *History of the Valentine* about to be published by Miss Paul.]

Dust

WHEN I am dead my dust shall blow
Among the places no man knows,
Where dew's unfailing fountains flow,
Deep in the bosom of a rose.

When droops the gold corn's heavy head
With ripeness for the harvest toil,
The dust I leave when I am dead
Will feed the roots in that rich soil.

Somewhere on some bright sea-bleached shore
Among the tide's white rippled sands
Will ebb and flood for evermore
Grains of this beating heart, these hands.

My dust shall feed the sap that thrills
In spring the waking orchard tree;
In air the perfumed blossom fills
Will dance the sunlit shreds of me.

No winds shall blow, no seas shall break
No stars shine on earth's mystery
That do not move or light or shake
Some unextinguished trace of me.

And in this dust, my soul shall live
And burn undimmed my spirit's flame,
Wordless and brooding still with love,
Dust, in the dust from whence I came.

E. Sydney-Smith.

"Paradise Lost" as Romance

IN THE POETRY REVIEW of May-June 1943, appeared Mr. G. E. Long's timely, stirring, and scholarly advocacy of Milton's writings and masterly sketch of his life, which instead of exhausting the subject should encourage the leading poetry periodical to intensify its treatment of the great master and his immortal masterpiece. No obsession with contemporary work would excuse neglect of Milton and calm acceptance of modern disparagement. I venture to assert that renewed criticism of "Paradise Lost" is an urgent matter, just as "Paradise Lost" is a poem for to-day.

With the greatest respect, I suggest the war in heaven should not be taken too seriously. For long, Satan has been regarded by critics as the hero of the poem; herein I go further, and submit it has been done largely at God's expense. Thus, the poem is *not* a buttress to the Church, and it is best to dismiss religion while reading it and to consider "God," "the Son," "Satan," etc., all as mere characters, and I ask for a like mental attitude towards this article, that I may not be misunderstood. The lot of Milton's epic is similar to those of Swift and Bunyan; the more they are read as *romance* the more they are admired.

In the March-April 1944 issue of this periodical, I wrote of "The Ancient Mariner." That poem was intended to be a romance and became a sermon: "Paradise Lost" was intended to have a deeply religious object and became a romance. Coleridge's moral was that, to God, a bird is as important as a man: Milton said (Book 4, line 618):

> "Man hath his daily work of body or mind
> Appointed, which declares his dignity,
> And the regard of Heaven on all his ways;
> While other animals unactive range,
> And of their doings God takes no account.

It would seem, therefore, that these two great poets had entirely different outlooks, though both were god-fearing men.

Milton was a master of rhyme, but he wrote "Paradise Lost" in blank verse because he knew it was hopeless to try to get impassioned speeches of equal intensity in rhyme and that the latter medium would vastly increase his task. He accompanied the explanation of his use of blank verse with an onslaught on rhyme.

In his preface to the poem, he explains that he "neglects" rhyme (or "the jingling sound of like endings") for his epic, and describes it as "the invention of a barbarous age, to set off *wretched matter*." This, from one who had written in rhyme for many years, and whose then chief claim to fame was founded upon it, argues that the poet was subject to revulsions of thought and is the more surprising inasmuch as, a few years earlier, he had "Done into Verse" (rhyme) many *psalms*; but it affords a clue to his remarkable treatment of the Fall of Man. In fact, I submit that "Paradise Lost" is the embodiment of a complete change of outlook on the part of its writer during the long period of its execution, with the result that, willy nilly, he has made Satan his hero, and has not done as well as could be expected for the Almighty.

Notwithstanding that the poet starts with an invocation to the heavenly Muse, followed by a more fervent one to the Spirit of God, for aid in his attempt "to justify the ways of God to men," and although, a few lines on, he describes the fallen angels and their leader as "he and his horrid crew," anon, he gives Satan a most

heroic speech, and throughout the poem not one of the great rebel's millions of followers ever deserts him, such is the love and esteem he inspires, and although further ugly epithets are hurled at him, he never utters a low thought or does a base act! God behaves despotically and cruelly. How to reconcile the poet's stated aspiration, and the quarters to which he appealed for help, with his performance, is a riddle I have endeavoured to solve, and, as a possibility, I suggest that, after the poem was well advanced, some of the early parts in which Satan now shows so favourably were rewritten into their present form. For it seems that the poem *intentionally* describes the war in heaven, and, *unintentionally*, the war within the poet himself; that he misunderstood his own mind at the start; took it to be an unquestionable fact that the documentary records of his religion left nothing to be desired, but found, on endeavouring to adhere to the old stories as literal truth, that his intellect would not be denied satisfaction; proof of this will be found at the end of my paper. That there was some writing-back is clear by the phrase (7.21), "Half yet remains unsung," for no writer knows the length of his book until he has finished it.

In describing heaven, Milton removed all earthly troubles therefrom and found the resulting vacancy insupportable; found earth, where there is something to *think* about, far better than heaven, where, as he describes it, there is only something to *sing* about. It seems (5.634) God did everything. He supplied the "Angels' food, and rubied nectar"—"with copious hand": it is impossible to imagine Archimedes or Edison living happily there, for there would be nothing for them to do, as (5.255) God even made the golden hinges of the gate of heaven; nor Mark Antony, for there could have been no Cleopatra (10.889) ("Creator wise, that peopled highest Heaven with Spirits masculine"); nor Milton himself, as, except for Satan, there would have been no subject for an epic. Therefore, it remains for another to give life in heaven a basis of *intellectual* happiness (if such a thing be possible), for Milton failed to do so, through being tied to tradition. But it was a glorious failure, for it led to his escaping from the difficulty by making it his first endeavour to show how the mind of man (as personified in Satan) triumphs over its surroundings, even though they are the most fearsome conceivable, and, in that, surely he succeeded beyond his own expectations!

(1.254):

> "A mind not to be changed by place or time.
> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
> What matter where, if I be still the same.

So, we can consider the poem as an exalted story of adventure, with a hero in whose fortunes we can take a personal interest until he has safely delivered us from a cloying existence in Eden. By losing that delectable spot, we gained the rest of the earth, which, each day, we find more wonderful and our powers of exploiting it greater—and God is justified to men by permitting Satan to have brought it about.

To quote Mr. Long, if "moderns are repelled" by Milton's "arbitrary deity" and "his puritanical Redeemer," proportionally are they attracted by the contrast the poet so amply supplies in the person of his most admirable and manly Satan, so that the new reader very soon doubts if he is "on the side of the angels." What a grand lesson for humanity is the unconquerable spirit he displays under conditions

of terror and suffering that could not be increased on earth, even in modern war! He has all the personal requisites to wage a war to win a world, and as he fell from the height of heaven, he rose to sublimity of character and conduct, and proved the truth of his own prediction (2.14), "from this descent Celestial virtues rising will appear."

How nobly he sympathises with his defeated warriors! (1.604):

> "cruel his eye, but cast
> Signs of remorse and passion, to behold
> The fellows of *his* crime, the followers rather
> (Far other once beheld in bliss), condemn'd
> For ever now to have their lot in pain;
> Millions of spirits for *his* fault amerc'd
> Of Heaven, and from eternal splendours flung
> For *his* revolt; yet faithful how they stood,
> He now prepar'd
> To speak;
> Thrice he assay'd, and thrice, in spite of scorn
> Tears, such as Angels weep, burst forth; at last
> Words, interwove with sighs, found out their way."

Thus Milton endows Satan with the supreme qualities of leadership and personal magnetism, for nothing less could have obtained devout loyalty under the "hellish" conditions in which they found themselves.

His great head was ruled by his greater heart. He rebelled against having a "Second Omnipotence" (6.684) imposed upon him, against an eternity of *double* adoration (5.783):

> "Too much to one, but double how endured,
> To one *and* to his image *now* proclaim'd?

against a *reduction* in rank. For Milton's God had said tyrannically, and although (8.419) there was "*No need* that Thou Shouldst propagate, already Infinite" (5.602):

> "Hear my decree, which unrevoked shall stand.
> This day I have begot whom I declare
> My only Son and on this holy hill
> Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
> At my right hand; your head I him appoint;
> And by my Self have sworn *to him shall bow*
> *All knees in heav'n* and shall confess him Lord.
> Under his great vice-gerent reign abide
> United, as one individual soul,
> For ever happy: him who disobeys
> Me disobeys, breaks union, and, that day
> Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls
> Into utter darkness, deep ingulf'd, his place
> Ordain'd without redemption, without end."

He required them to be "happy," but tended to make it impossible for them to be so, by appending information of the fate that awaited them if they failed.

Even the terrible threats in the last three lines were insufficient to prevent the

revolt of one-third of the angels, which shows how great was the dissatisfaction with their (2.252) "state Of splendid vassalage," and we may reckon that without the deterrent of the dire penalty the majority would have been on Satan's side, for (5.680):

"New laws from Him who reigns new minds may raise
In us who serve."

I have mentioned a *reduction* in rank. That Satan suffered one is proved by the word above quoted ("to him shall bow All knees in heaven") and the repetition of those words in the following passage, after the word "reduce," thus making it clear that they are symbolical of the *reduction* (3.319):

"under thee, as head supreme,
Thrones, Princedoms, Powers, Dominions, I reduce:
All knees to thee shall bow,"

The word "reduce" is the most important in the poem, as it is Satan's justification for his rebellion. He had done nothing to deserve the reduction in rank when God begot the Son and declared all knees should bow to him. Reduction in rank is a punishment; he had not deserved punishment, and to revolt against undeserved punishment cannot be termed a crime. The leadership of the revolt inevitably fell to the great archangel; he was (2.5) "by merit rais'd To that bad eminence" and "Me, though just right, and the fix'd laws of Heaven Did first create your leader; next free choice," and it is made clear that Satan did not head the revolt solely for his own sake, as he soliloquised "I, in one night, freed from servitude inglorious well-nigh half the Angelick name." The creation of the Son bore hardest on him for, until then, he had been, as Abdiel reminded him "In place thyself so high above thy peers" (5.812), and as stated (5.659):

"of the first
If not *the* first archangel, great in power,
In favour and *pre-eminence*"

second only to God. His sense of injured merit" was natural. Even if what one of the opposite side declared were true, that Satan (4.959):

"Once fawned and cringed and servilely adored
Heaven's awful monarch,"

he merely did what was expected of him (leaving his alleged motive out of consideration) as of every other angel, but it still does not follow it was his duty to act the same, also, towards another, or, as might have been the case to many another. St. Matthew records "No man can serve two masters."

Milton says Satan (5.695) "infused bad influence into th' unwary breast Of his associate," but proves beforehand that he had spoken openly of his dissatisfaction and that his associate was well aware of his meaning and was in agreement with him, for he passes on the signal to "the regent Powers, Under him regent" (5.702):

"Tells the suggested cause, and casts between
Ambiguous words and jealousies, to sound
Or taint integrity: But all obey'd
The wonted signal and superiour voice
Of their great Potentate; for great indeed
His name, and high was his degree in Heaven;
His countenance, as the morning star that guides

The starry flock, allur'd them, and with lies
Drew after him the third part of Heaven's host.

As "*all* obeyed," it appears the result of the "sounding" was sufficient to prove all were ripe for rebellion and that it was unnecessary for Satan's colleague to do any "tainting." This is confirmed by Gabriel, who described Satan's followers (4.952) as a "rebellious crew"—"Army of Fiends, fit body to fit head." Moreover, had Satan allured them "with lies," as soon as they had discovered the deception, there would have been deserters, but "yet faithful how they stood," and after Satan had said (in a speech where the alleged lies are not to be found) (5.787), "Will ye submit your necks and choose to bend The supple knee?", Abdiel remonstrated, but "None seconded him" although they were (1.338) "innumerable as locusts" and (1.664) had "Millions of flaming swords." Never was a cause on earth unanimously adopted by so many! and, later, one of his (Satan's) chiefs (6.451) described him as their "Deliverer from new lords."

Satan's grand soliloquy (4.31) begun "in sighs" proves him not to have been bad innately, but, if at all, as the result of profound reasoning. He did not ask to be created; God did it to please himself and in return he required (4.45) "service"; so presumably that was God's reason for creating him. His (4.40) "pride" (which he modestly admits, but which his adherents would deem self-esteem (8.571), "Oft-times nothing profits more than self-esteem") and his "worse ambition" were created *with him* and antipathies for them supplied by the creation of the *Son*. God's service involved "to afford Him praise" (4.46) and "to pay him thanks," that was all, or, let us say, the first duty, but to Satan, and it seems to most of the heavenly choir, it was "The debt immense of endless gratitude, So burthensome, still paying, still to owe" (4.52), and God brought about the revolt by demanding it also for the Son. Satan generously credits God with "heav'n's free love dealt equally to all" (4.68), but the poet provided no love *or* freedom in God's speech of introduction for the Son (5.602), and Raphael in his discourse with Adam unwittingly proves there was no freedom in heaven, by saying (5.529): "Our voluntary service he requires, Not our necessitated." Here is a contradiction in terms. Had it said "desires" that would have been expressing a wish, but "requires" implies a demand and a thing demanded cannot be given voluntarily. Obedience was demanded for the Son and knees were to be bowed to him. Were this to have been done voluntarily there would have been no penalty for disobedience; such a fearful penalty as that announced "necessitated" compliance by frail spirits. Raphael (8.224) told Adam "Nor less think we in Heaven of thee on Earth Than of our fellow-servant" and (8.238) that "He sends us upon his high behests for state—and to inure Our prompt obedience."

No mercy "as the gentle rain from heaven" dropped on the fallen angels. Milton himself rebelled against the divine right of kings, and the poem proves he had a fellow-feeling for his Satan, as although he terms him "the author of all ill" (2.381), he makes no attempt to prove it. No need to tell *him* to give the Devil his due! He "justifies the ways of God to men" circuitously, but does not justify the ways of God to Satan; "God" has my sympathy; for the poet depicted the ancient Hebrew God, who obtained by terror what was not tendered for love. God created Milton and Milton created the God of "Paradise Lost"; such God does not exist outside the poem for "he (the true God) is a good fellow."

Has Milton given Satan the right to consider himself as the offspring of the Almighty equally with the Son? It appears all the angels were sons of God for he addressed them as "sons" (11.84), but that *the* Son was (11.46) "accepted" by God as his son. The Son describes man to the Father as "thy youngest son" and Satan said (4.43) "me, whom he created what I was" and (4.105) "instead of us out-cast—Mankind created" and (6.95) Raphael told Adam the angels before the revolt were all "as sons of one great Sire, Hymning the Eternal Father." If man were the youngest son, Satan, judging by these quotations, was his elder brother, in which case, as the poet has personified Sin and Death, the alarming result is that their line runs through Satan to the Godhead!

God is not favoured in the following colloquy. He says (3.131):

"Man therefore shall find grace,
The other none: In mercy and justice both,
Through Heaven and Earth, so shall my glory excel;
But mercy, first and last, shall brightest shine."

and the Son replies, "should Man finally be lost," and goes on to suggest that in such case "shall the Adversary thus obtain His end, and frustrate thine?" and God answers "All hast thou spoken as my thoughts are" from which it would appear man was to be treated more favourably than Satan, not merely for mercy, but also to save God from being defeated by Satan.

Please note that in the above quotation the comma should be after "justice" instead of "both." That it is a printer's error (presumably handed on from the first edition) is proved by the Son echoing his Father's words, thus "For which *both Heaven and Earth* shall high extol Thy praises." Having thus *proved* there is one printer's error, should justify a change being made in the punctuation wherever it would make an obscure passage clear, for Milton could not read the proofs of his work, owing to his blindness.

(6.289) Satan told Michael, "The strife which thou call'st evil, we style The strife of glory;". As we have seen, he had reason so to consider it.

If "the author of all ill" deceived Eve, has no man behaved in a similar way to one of her daughters and yet lived an honoured life? In Satan's case, it was an act of war, a reprisal, and by way of asserting the right of the defeated by force to continue until they are also defeated by reason, for (1.648) "who overcomes By force, hath overcome but half his foe." God appears to be in agreement with that reasoning for he told Abdiel (6.40) "subdue By force who reason for their law refuse."

Satan transformed himself to serve his cause and that of his followers. Our secret service agents do the same and we heartily thank them for it.

He prophesied (9.708) "ye shall be as gods" and said (9.717) "what are gods, that man may not become As they, participating God-like food?" and (4.525) "whom knowledge might exalt Equal with Gods." Not yet is he disproved!

There seems a clash in the following two passages:

(2.263): "how *oft amidst*
Thick clouds and *dark* doth heav'n's all-ruling Sire
Choose to *reside*, his glory unobscured,
And with the majesty of *darkness round*
Covers his throne:"

and (3.3):

"since God is light,
And *never* but in unapproached *light*
Dwelt from eternity."

The presence of the "fiery steeds" (2.531) on which the fallen angels "in swift race contend" in Hell and (6.391) the "fiery-foaming steeds" used in the battle in Heaven, is not explained, which is cause for regret.

Several incidents in the poem seem sublimity tinged with humour (1.682)—

"Mammon whose
looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heaven's pavement, trodden gold"—

(6.189):

"Satan who
with vast and haughty strides advanced,
Came tow'ring arm'd in adamant and gold:"

and who makes a speech in which he states he is about to chastise Abdiel, suddenly receives from the latter "a noble stroke" on his "proud crest," and thus his massive dignity is upset by the nimbleness of his much smaller adversary. The result was that Satan fell on his knee as if a mountain pushed from its seat had "Half sunk with all his pines." Such "a mountain" as Satan could not find refuge in a forest or among rocks, dens or caves, as suggested (9.116) for the total capacity of such would be included in his own size. Surely the "noble stroke" gave Satan a headache, if nothing more, yet it is stated (6.327) that after Michael's sword had entered his right side, in a later combat, "Then Satan *first* knew pain." Instead of standing at a disadvantage, Abdiel might have increased his size until he equalled Satan, for (6.352) "Spirits' size Assume, as likes them best," and supposing Satan then increased his, and a competition resulted, my readers may imagine what would have happened. Michael (mentioned above) was (6.44) "of celestial armies prince," and Gabriel "in military prowess next," and I should like to know how their abilities were thus assessed? for (6.91) "strange to us it seem'd At first, that Angel should with Angel war." Thus, there had been no opportunity to provide a test.

I feel we are much indebted to Milton for his insistence on the beauty and dignity of the human form. He makes it appear that it is easier to please the Devil than Mr. T. S. Eliot, who has said "the eye is not shocked in his twylight Hell as it is in the Garden of Eden, where I can get pleasure from the verse only by the deliberate effort not to visualise Adam and Eve and their surroundings."

Satan, the "great Sultan" (1.338) of his legions and (10.455) "their mighty chief" who, with their acclamations, has personally undertaken the onerous task of obtaining revenge upon God by going "In search of this new world" containing the "new race call'd Man" with a view to Man's discomfiture, "falls for the first woman he meets"! as narrated in the following beautiful passage, in which he appears as an ideal lover (9.444):

"Much he the place admir'd, the person more.—
If chance, with nymph-like step, fair virgin pass,
What pleasing seem'd, for her now pleases more;

She most, and in her look sums all delight:
Such pleasure took the Serpent to behold
This flowery plat, the sweet recess of Eve
Thus early, thus alone: Her heavenly form
Angelick, but more soft and feminine,
Her graceful innocence, her every air
Of gesture or least action, overaw'd
His malice, and with rapine sweet bereav'd
His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
That space the Evil-one abstracted stood
From his own evil, and for the time remain'd
Stupidly good; of enmity disarm'd,
Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge:"

By using the phrase "stupidly good," Milton has made plain the whole trend of his epic: raised his head above the trench of innermost thought in the field of authorship and exposed his position to the hostile critics. For his lapse from evil, he is belatedly complaining of his principal character, who, all along, has not been keeping to the part originally designed for him; but it was because his author could not keep him under control, for he wearied of his own irreproachable angels. His ultimate subject, the supremacy of the intellect, ran away with him. He intended to paint Satan black, but kept dipping his brush into bright colour. This explains why he used such an unexpected phrase, one that, for him, should have been a contradiction in terms.

Milton might have done much better for God regarding his relations with Adam. He states that Adam ate the forbidden fruit rather than leave Eve to suffer alone; Adam's was a noble action, though any other man would have acted similarly, from which it would appear he did the right thing. Adam even decided on this course of action before the crisis arose, for he said (9.267) "The wife—by her husband stays, Who guards her, or with her the worst endures."

Even to Satan, God's motive in planting "the fatal tree"—of knowledge, was a mystery, for (4.513) he said:

"All is not theirs, it seems;
One fatal tree there stands, of knowledge call'd,
Forbidden them to taste: Knowledge forbidden?
Suspicious, reasonless. Why should their Lord
Envy them that? Can it be sin to know?
Can it be death? And do they only stand
By ignorance? Is that their happy state,
The proof of their obedience and their faith?
O fair foundation laid whereon to build
Their ruin! hence I will excite their minds
With more desire to know, and to reject
Envious commands, invented with design
To keep them low whom knowledge might exalt
Equal with gods:"

According to Genesis, Adam tasted of the forbidden fruit without the slightest

compunction upon its being offered him by Eve, for it says "she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her; and he did eat," whereas, in the poem (9.890) when Eve confessed to Adam she had eaten of the forbidden fruit "horror chill Ran through his veins," and he said (9.904):

"Some cursed fraud
Of enemy hath beguil'd thee, yet unknown,
And me with thee hath ruin'd; for with thee
Certain my resolution is to die:

In accordance with these sentiments, he ate the fruit when Eve offered it him, but Milton has clearly exculpated him from the perversion implied in the biblical story, and by so doing has put God's unforgiveness in an unfavourable light. Further, according to Milton, had Adam been the first to taste the fruit, it would have been what could be expected, for God created him with a thirst for knowledge, and put it within his reach (7.60). Adam after Raphael has described Satan's rebellion, was

"Led on, yet sinless, *with desire to know*—
as one whose drouth
Yet scarce allay'd still eyes the current stream,
Whose liquid murmur heard new thirst excites,"

Also (12.558), Adam says:

"Greatly instructed I shall hence depart;
Greatly in peace of thought; and have my fill
Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;"

These words are in his last speech. Thus does Milton justify Adam. His "drouth" for knowledge allayed, the poem ends, a few lines later, with his leaving Eden with Eve after dropping "Some natural tears but wip'd them soon;"—for his state of ignorance was over.

When Mr. G. E. Long heard of the German invasion of the Low Countries, on May 10, 1940, he says he turned to Milton. It would have been an appropriate moment in which to have chanced upon the following (2.496):

"O shame to men! Devil with devil damn'd
Firm concord holds; men only disagree
Of creatures rational, though under hope
Of heavenly grace: and, God proclaiming peace,
Yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife,
Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,
Wasting the earth, each other to destroy:"

We are born with brains so cannot help thinking; so cannot help acquiring knowledge. It is doubtful whether any knowledge is evil, though it may be put to evil use. Thinking is the greatest pleasure in life, more satisfying than bodily activity and its fruits far more plentiful; this I must say, although Milton apostrophises Adam and Eve (4.774) "happiest if ye—know to know no more." Joy in the *process* of mental achievement is permanent; in its *success* transitory, for once the goal is reached, the ceaseless play of the mind requires another outlet. ("Things won are done, Joy's soul lies in the doing," "Troilus and Cressida.") This is obtainable on earth, but not in Milton's arcadian heaven, where singing, dancing and feasting seem to have been the sole occupations. Here are a few of the numerous instances (5.161):

"with songs
And choral symphonies, *day without night*
Circle his throne rejoicing;"

(5.251):

"Flew through the midst of Heaven: the angelic quires
On each hand parting, to his speed gave way"

(5.618):

"That day, as *other* solemn days, they spent
In song and dance about the sacred hill;

(5.630): Forthwith from dance to sweet repast they turn"

(6.167):

"Ministering Spirits, train'd up in feast and song!"

all this and very much more of singing, although the poet wrote (2.556), "For eloquence the soul, song charms the sense," and thus proved his heaven more sensual than soulful! Therefore, I would rather live here than there; rather be reading of paradise "lost" than find myself in it, and I conclude (as I said at the start) that the active mind of Milton rebelled against the heaven of its own creation, and that he justified the ways of God to men, not in the way he intended at first, but in Voltairean fashion, by painting (in undertones) this earth as the best of all possible worlds *for the human race*; that it is not perfect is one of its essential excellencies, for if, like his heaven (and Eden), there were nothing in it capable of being improved by *our own* exertions, we should be miserable. For similar reasons, Mammon argued in favour of Hell in comparison to Heaven, as follows (2.249):

"Let us—
Live to ourselves, though in this vast recess,
Free, and to none accountable, preferring
Hard liberty before the easy yoke
Of servile pomp. Our greatness will appear
Then most conspicuous, when great things of small,
Useful of hurtful, prosperous of adverse,
We can create; and in what place so e'er
Thrive under evil, and work ease out of pain
Through labour and endurance."

What a magnificent set of rebels they were, when even (1.679) "the *least* erected (elevated in mind) spirit that fell from Heav'n" could utter such noble thoughts as these!

In Eden, God had provided unsuitable conditions for man, who, even if Satan had not tempted, would still have risked all for the sake of knowledge, as he now does, daily. Man does not thrive on coddlement, therefore, the expulsion from Paradise into the earth as we know it, was also the entrance into the freedom of self-reliance and progress. Thus Satan also, who brought it about, is *justified to men*, though it certainly was not Milton's original intention that such should be the case. And Milton himself is more than justified for giving us such a glorious epic. Truly we may be thankful that after his sight failed he was still (3.29) "Smit with the love of sacred song"!

Near the start of this article I promised proof of Milton's change of mind. Here it is. He wrote (12.473):

"Full of doubt I stand,
Whether I should repent me now of sin
By me done and occasion'd; or rejoice
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring;"

Thus said Adam, after Michael had related to him what would happen to the world (based on the Old Testament) *and Michael did not reprove him.* From this quotation, drawn from the *latter part* of the *last chapter* of the poem, it appears conclusive that Milton had completely changed his ideas during the course of the poem for *right at the beginning* (1.3) he spoke of the forbidden tree that "Brought death into the world and *all our woe*," whereas, *right at the end* he permitted Adam to rejoice "that *Much more good* thereof shall spring:" Thus, he started to describe the world's greatest calamity and finished by pronouncing it to have been a blessing!

It is strange that, on a second point concerning the end of the poem, only in the epic's first four lines is the solution definitely to be found! Addison finishes his celebrated criticism in *The Spectator* by deferentially suggesting the omission of the last two lines of the poem, on the ground that whereas the two lines immediately preceding would have let the poem finish on a hopeful note, the addition of

They, hand in hand, with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

make a mournful ending. The preceding lines are

The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:

and he considers the other two "fall much below" them, but I submit this is partially due to their being misplaced. Put the four lines in the order in which they appear above, and the first pair are much improved by being thus placed in their proper position; they are then seen to be necessary in order to continue the narrative; the finish of the poem augurs well for the future of mankind and is therefore in accordance with the poet's intention to "justify the ways of God to men," and the blemish discovered by Addison is removed.

Paradise was in the country of Eden. In the fourth line of the poem, it states "with loss of Eden." Therefore, we must infer that until Adam and Eve had passed through Eden the world was *not* "all before them," any more than it was while they were in Paradise. This is, definitely, a further reason for the suggested transposition. It seems "the hastening Angel" did not stay to finish his task, for he merely led them "down the cliff" to the foot of Paradise and "then disappeared"; nevertheless, they had to take "their solitary way" through the rest of Eden in order to justify the fourth line of the poem.

HOWARD PARSONS.

A FUNERAL oration by a professor of philosophy, and quotations from Shakespeare, Shelley, Swinburne and Tennyson, displaced hymns and the customary church service at the cremation of Mr. F. E. C. Habgood, a Bristol solicitor and former city councillor.

Lonesome Pine

A LONESOME pine awaits me,
Waits with sighs,
And stretches high, with old, far-seeing eyes,
To see what hates me.

A lonesome pine is waiting
On a hill,
Where peace is plentiful and strong and still,
And consummating.

Thos. Astore.

Kittens at Play

THE little black cats—identical twins—
Are deftly patterned with milk-white socks,
Are snowy of mask and bib and mittens.
Even their ear-muffs have silver clocks,
Each eye is bland as a golden quince,
Each whisker fierce on these valiant kittens.

Scampering under the great arm chair,
One of them, hidden behind the flounce,
Spars with a dexterous claw extended;
The other feigns to be unaware,
His haunches quiver before the pounce. . . .
He leaps and their fluent forms are blended.

Baltimore, Maryland. *Eleanor Glenn Wallis.*

Moonsilver

THE sullen evening mourns the dying day
On shores where cold seas, storm encircled, lift.
Giant waves, relentless, break in rising spray
Where birds, wind driven, fall and curve and drift

Till darkness bids them fly with wings for shrouds,
Nor stay the desolation, rather go
Beyond the day, beyond the furthest clouds
To distant islands mindful not of woe

Where sorrow cannot claim their even flight
Of moon grey wings, nor grief the ocean's roar.
There midnight plunders, in metallic light
(All strung like stars across a waste of shore).

Moon silvered stones, new burnished from the sea,
And coins of them a faery currency.

Richmond, Surrey. *Ernestine Barton.*

Poets and Pretenders

WE commence our bi-monthly survey this time with some provocative, or at least candid, remarks about a poem entitled "London," by Donald Cowie (Tantivy Press, 5s. 6d.). The author's description of this work is indeed, "satirical poem," but we doubt whether the qualification excuses the entire absence of poetic quality. The art of versification, practised here in rhymed pentameter couplets, is excellently achieved, but there all resemblance to poetry ends and the nearly one thousand lines of clever verbiage which constitute the book will, we believe, defeat all but the hardiest and most insensitive of readers. Here is a sample of the sort of thing, miscalled poetical satire, to be found therein:

"And now for Music, purest maid of art,
Divine assuagement, like the costive's f . . . t,
When sound alone can compensate for failure,
Frustration's final and the soul's Australia."

Somewhat obscure in the last line, but not at all in the vulgarity which precedes it; and there is a refusal to observe the reticences demanded by both art and good manners in too many places in this so-called poem. One thinks of the great satirists Pope, Dryden and the rest, with their contempt and invective barbed, not with a sort of sour flippancy, but with a poet's penetrating inspiration to detect the mean and the worthless, and one puts Mr. Cowie down as "a writer of modern verse . . ." (see blurb), but not readable nor amusing enough for so sustained an effort and as, anyhow, not suitable for persons in search of poetry.

Poems to Mary, by Jonathan Hanaghan (Runa Press, 8s. 6d.), is an altogether different sort of book, even more so than appears from its title, for it is written in free-verse and relies, almost entirely, upon emotional content for its appeal. The book is a devotional tribute to a dead wife, an anthology of requiems, which develop a strain of philosophical reflection from the contemplation of a deserved bygone happiness. There is no forcing of the note nor literary insincerity nor indeed any disposition to be over-reverent. Reverence is ample for Mr. Hanaghan, as witness the following:

"We two did drink the dear delight
Of sensual bliss unharmed by that dark curse
that mildews Eden's hour with shame;
that in Elohim's name equates pure love
with palsied love of puritans.
We took the gift life-given
all unashamed.
Flesh and spirit blended we
as cup and wine are one.
But we did riot not
with flesh from spirit torn:
we lived in our full flower
as Adam did and Eve;
we had no huckster bargaining with God
on this His rapturous gift.
We learned no Stopian lore;
no parsimonious rationing

by separating blossom-bloom
from care-full fruit."

A tender and sincere compilation which conveys many valuable reflections upon life and its essential nature in a manner quite free from egotism and often beautiful.

Anthologies, as we have remarked before, are laborious work for the conscientious reviewer, who debarred by the paper shortage from naming every contributor who may charm or displease him is therefore constrained to mention none. This is a hard matter, for nothing is more pleasing than to distribute censure except to lavish praise. These things lighten the task and confer that Olympian assurance upon the humble critic which makes him so universally disliked. However, *Poems from Italy* (Harrap, 6s.), an anthology of verse by members of the Eighth Army, with an introduction by Siegfried Sassoon, is much too good to ignore. There are forty-seven contributors, an alarming number of poets for one Army, however victorious, and had the Mediterranean not rolled between their battlefields and the ancient land of Greece they must assuredly have conquered Parnassus. Most if not all of the poems are in a traditional form and have that sensitive simplicity which that form demands for its proper employment. Modern soldiers they may be, but in their spiritual adventurings they have used the ancient weapons and the marshalled forces of a classical age and used them well.

A volume of verse by Eric Chilman, *Sixty Lyrics and One* (Muller, 7s. 6d.), is a pleasant reminder, too, of the invincible quality of the old order which changeth indeed, but only superficially. These short lyrics are most of them delightful though none of them is particularly impressive. A love of nature is in the main their inspiration, and in his portrayal of its scenes, aspects and incidents, Mr. Chilman is excellently well served by an individual quality of thought, phrasing and expression. This does not disguise the essential slightness of his poems, but it does lend them an authentic charm and distinction. Here is a good example:

"The swans, the crystal wave
A mirror for the moon,
These haunt me to the grave,
Are constant as a tune
Once heard, once caught, that rings
Undying in memory.
Thus transient local things
Take on infinity."

These things and others like them are well said although they have, most of them, been said often enough before. But in expression only we find newness; neither in our thoughts nor our dreams is there anything to aid us in our struggle to be original. It is sufficient to say that the author has an individuality of expression which has sought beauty rather than peculiarity: that he has taken to heart that tag from Pope anent the nature of true wit.

Godfrey Locker Lampson is another poet of the same genre, who so far as one may judge from a new and more comprehensive collection of poems which reaches

us—*Sun and Shadow* (Muller, 7s. 6d.)—has never sought the peculiar but has been content, nay happy, with a classically featured muse. Love has been indeed his theme and in the sonnet he may be accounted a quite excellent performer. We have already quoted in these paragraphs a sonnet which is included in this present volume for it appeared in an earlier book published in 1944, but there is the same perfect mastery of form and lively fire in all of them. Here is one which has a more than usually classical flavour with its antique concern of the lover with the clock; but charming and fresh nevertheless:

"How slow is time when you, love, are away;
He barely stirs upon the dial's face;
Each minute seems an hour, each hour a day,
So leaden are his steps, so tired his pace;
But would he stayed his course in very deed
While you are absent from your waiting lover,
And slackened even more his sluggish speed,
Nor crawled with weary trail the clock's face over;
For, as he creeps, there wither in his train
Those precious hours I'd spend with you alone,
And thus when you return to me again,
Part of our love's brief summer will have flown;
So when he lags, I rate him for delay
And yet, because he moves, would have him stay."

How many poets alive to-day could turn out as charming and as technically perfect a piece of work. It is irrelevant to call it old fashioned or hackneyed in theme, it is still a work of art, and if it be somewhat mannered, as many of Mr. Lampson's things are, it is a fine manner and full of vitality. Not least among this sonnet's charms is the metaphysical unreason of the argument, so reminiscent of the Elizabethan lover and yet, as we all know, so true.

An anthology of modern Turkish poetry is both a new and an interesting field to browse in and so we found *The Star and the Crescent*, by Derek Patmore (Constable, 3s. 6d.). More than twenty poets, each equally unknown to us, are represented and in most cases by more than one poem. In an introduction Mr. Patmore says that he has only helped to choose and revise the poems in English and that most of the translations have been made by a young Turkish girl who is teaching English Literature in the famous Turkish University but who wishes to remain anonymous, but there is an acknowledgment to Lord Dunsany for some of them.

This is not a Turkish Rubaiyat. There is a more vigorous, a fresher, air about these poems of a Kemalist era; and yet there is no sign of a western patina on these expressions of a national muse, at once earthy and lyrical.

"My heart:
A ball . . .
Shall I throw this ball to the stars
Or to you?
If I throw it to you
Will you be able to catch it?"

and again,

"Your breath smells of roses
Is there a garden within you?
A stranger's glance has left its mark on your face,
Who has looked at you, my love? . . .

"Sew a handkerchief and send it to me!
Embroider it with silver and send it to me!
Put three apples into it
Bite into one of the apples and send it to me."

This anthology needed doing. It is as fresh as revolution and as old as Islam. There is an immemorial and vigorous youth in its figures, which springs from the soil, and is never perhaps far from it, but is none the less alight with an imagination which gives it grace and spirit.

"Sometimes I blow like the winds.
Sometimes I am dusty like the roads.
Sometimes I flow like the waters.
Come and see what love has done to me!"

We have no means of knowing how good these things are as translations, but they are very much worth while as here presented and will whet an appetite for more.

Less, much less, concerned with what the Turk and the young man's fancy are said to turn to so lightly is *Nab Valley*, by Alban Levy (John Lane, 3s. 6d.). A serious, and indeed often gloomy view, is that of this young Welsh soldier. Perhaps there is but little to be glad about in this sad world, but Mr. Levy finds nothing in this particular volume to say about that little anyway. And what he does say upon his sober themes is said unmusically and not always clearly, but with a certain force and sombre eloquence:

"Unhallowed is the word for war
Unhallowed is the name,
Wrought out of pity
Hewn in a molten horror
And set in a cast of shame.
Mad is the synonym
Mercy the mother,
Frenzy the father
And dead is the brother.
Over his head they lie
Layer on layer
Blood is unstemmed and die
Sooner or later."

The wandering of this utterance from the coherent is apparently intentional and is not absent from some of the other poems presented in this first volume. These unexpectednesses are part of the gloomy fun and are certainly the major part of the excitement which these poems provide. But the thrill is cerebral for though the mind is defeated often the bombardment with normally unrelated images is as mentally stimulating as too many drinks and about as useful:

"Tangle the bowline, ask and asking
Phrases dropping from young lips
Like fruitstones from a hag's mouth.
Am I more form, more shape, more tune
Than the wild fashion of a spring hunter?

Am I more poised
Than the balanced wheel in my father's heart
Or the green snake that calls me envy?"

We should say, No, but we should still be guessing.

What fun titles are? We mean book-titles, of course. *Versatile Verse* (Alliance Press), is good, if we ever saw one, and the authoress, Zelma Kremer, is to be congratulated upon it although it certainly did not prepare us for the matter between the covers. The verse is well enough, if undistinguished, and the versatility would appear to consist in some experimentation with verse forms. The themes are neither more nor less varied than is usual and are handled competently on the whole, but without any particular depth of feeling.

Resurgan Books, like all things else, are various in quality, but *Selected Poems*, by Clifford Dyment (Falcon Press, 3s. 6d.), struck us at once by its quality of simple sincerity. There is no pretence to an undue weightiness, no delphic nonsense about it, but pleasant fancies, stray thoughts, and remembered incidents and scenes presented with an eager and an accomplished poetic insight which we found enticing. It is a little book—ten minutes will absorb its twenty or so pages, but not all its charm:

"From the window of my room
On the rim of the night,
I can see the town of Gloucester
In a cluster of light.

I do not want to go there:
Here I am in the still
And tender hand of darkness
Moving from hill to hill.

I want no guns or battleships:
The assurance of a tree
Is in the hand of England
Here about me."

Less immediately satisfying was another Resurgan, *The Passionate Climate*, by G. A. Wagner (Falcon Press, 3s. 6d.). More complicated in its more conscious artistry, it seeks for more and achieves less, because poetry is a spontaneous quality in our words which is repelled by the conscious enticement of literary effort. The muse, poor girl, though much maligned, is quite definitely not of a literary turn of mind. She uses words since she must, but likes them few and simple, knowing so well that one too many is more weight on the wing and that pretension is heavier than feathers. Yet Mr. Wagner's verse has merit if it is but the merit of thoughtful vigour and expertise in the craft. The trouble is he tries, as so many others, to do with words what is not in them, but only in their miraculous unconscious grouping by inspiration.

Two volumes of the collected Poems of Elizabeth Shane, generously illustrated with photographs of Irish scenes (Dundalgan Press, 6s. each) might seem a somewhat substantial dose of Hibernian songs to offer simultaneously to the world, but there is a sustained zest and an unstraining quality about them which goes far to justify the enterprise. The poems are so-called, however, by a generic courtesy only, being devoid of poetry save in a quality of sincerity and musical deftness of touch; and rely for much of their appeal upon an Irish turn of phrase. For those who like such sympathetic but unstimulating things these volumes will provide pleasant reading. There is certainly no technical roughness nor obscurity of language to irritate, for the authoress writes as simply as her own uncomplicated thought dictates.

Which is not what happens to Mr. Vernon Watkins whose book *The Lamp and the Veil* (Faber, 6s.) is to hand, and yet we are presented therein with a far richer fare. The trouble with it is just that complication of thought and feeling which appears demand an unsimple method of presentation, making its perusal a labour which nevertheless we find it hard to forgo since it dangles its half-seen emotional carrot just not out of sight but never clearly perceived. The unfairness of this sort of thing is due either to an inferior carrot which must be decently veiled; or to there being none at all, but only an adumbration of that succulent vegetable. Whichever be the matter here, it is clear that words have not been used for the clarification of things, but for the exaggeration of their emotional quality by confusion and mystery; and this spectral intention has, at times, been consummated with that effect of profundity belonging to emotion which is never quite positively communicated. It is pertinent to speculate whether the author's own emotions remained uncrystallised and cloudy during the process of parturition, or whether the effect was produced cerebrally. Whichever is true, the work is of high quality; but to call it poetry is we think to ignore this conscious literary taint; and it is more than strange to read such things as this, put into the mouth of Yeats, in the opening poem, "Yeats in Dublin":

" 'The young poets,' he murmured,
'Toil too much. They lay
Something on their table,
And dissect, and wear it away
Till nothing but the grit is left;
But all song is gay.
'There must always be a quality
Of nonchalance in the work.
The intellect is impotent
Labouring in the dark.
For a poem is always
A piece of luck.' "

These are magnificent sentiments which receive our emphatic endorsement, but Mr. Watkins, who *can* be nonchalant, is at the mercy of an intellect which even if it does not labour in the dark yet manages to disseminate it liberally, with too many allusions imperfectly articulated to his theme, and a too lordly disregard of our inferior perceptions and knowledge.

"Child Shades of my ignorant darkness, I mourn that moment alive
Near the glow-lamped Eumenides' house overlooking the ships in flight,
Where Pearl White focussed our childhood, near the foot of Cwmdonkin Drive,
To a figment of crime stampeding in the poster's wind-blown flight."

In sharp contrast to such fundamentally fruitless labour is *No Wasted Hour*, by Prudence MacDonald (Sidgwick & Jackson, 5s.), a just title we think. This slim volume reveals an equal emotional quality with the last, but with that added comprehensibility which makes it poetry. It is true, of course, that any genuinely inspired utterance clothes itself in simple language and if obscurity should arise, from an imperfect technique, it will be only of that sort which is readily penetrable by a moment's thought. Where there is more than this it is usually the result of literary design and the aspect of profundity which it wears is illusory and, at its best, productive, in the reader, of an idle day-dreaming state through which nebulae of thoughts and ideas pass in a disorderly procession. For our part, we prefer our reveries to be un-cicerone, to be conditioned by our own moods, and to remain apart from those moments when we are reading poetry. Prudence MacDonald thinks as we do

and troubles her intellect and ours with little darkness. She is modest, too, and properly so, which only gives her work a more authentic note:

"Ah, Shelley, you who sailed
out of life on the breath of the west wind,
and lit a new star;
look again on the earth you left behind,
and regret from afar
how your successors failed."

It is encouraging to those who have, for so long, waged unremitting war upon these apostles of darkness, with their formlessness, to observe a recession of their tide. Whether this is due to the silent pressure of public distaste, or to a mass conversion of the benighted, we do not know. It probably has little to do with our own still small voice; but, save in some obstinate quarters, such things are now seen for what they are where once they were called poetry and hailed as revelation. It is now once again recognised that true poetry is a fruit which hangs within the reach of everyone, and of which he may partake according to his capacity. The poetry of Milton or of Shakespeare, and of others of the immortals, may be read and enjoyed by the almost illiterate for the music of its voice and the radiance of its surface beauty but, like the ocean, it still offers unplumbed deeps for those equipped to plunge. The task of the modern poet is not to imitate but to emulate these great ones and most assuredly not to assault our emotions under cover of an intellectual smoke-screen. That is to lower the dignity of man himself whose vocal power of clear communication is at once his title to superiority over the beast and his most potent weapon to assure it.

How great a field remains for the true poet, he of the light, can only be guessed at. But the enormous achievement of the past demonstrates that originality of clear utterance is inexhaustible and is part of our natural unduplicated individuality. Nature is said not to repeat herself in her constant reproduction of life, and while we are often too gross, maybe, to recognise her differences and permutations in other forms of creation, we have no difficulty in observing our own uniqueness amid the teeming mass of our fellows. And we are different, not only in the subtleties of mind and spirit but always, and even in the case of identical twins, physically also. A book of translations called *Translation* (*London*) (Phoenix Press, 2s.), which promises to be the forerunner of a series, lends point to these reflections. Here are poems from the Latin and Greek of classical times, and others from many European countries written in a modern day, and never once did we note a deliberate obscurity of expression or a plagiarism. And yet, and this is also a tribute to the quality of the translations, there is, in most of them, comprehensibility both for the fallow and the cultivated mind. In some of them, it is true, there is difficulty which requires a concentration of attention hardly possible to the former, but the meaning is there, was intended to be there, and can be apprehended.

The Editors of *Translation* (*London*) are to be congratulated upon their enterprise. It will, we believe, be welcomed and we only regret that the continuing shortages of labour and paper appear to have dictated a less permanent binding than it deserves.

Beryl Halinbourg who sends us from Australia a book of poems called *New*

Weapons of the Spirit, believes with us that these should be bright. She makes no bones in her introduction about her view of Mr. T. S. Eliot, who is so often debited with the responsibility (or some of it) for the modern manner of obfuscation which we have been discussing. Indeed she believes much of his work to possess qualities (?) which are corrupting. To be denied the full revelation which so much of Eliot's work prompts us by its beauty so ardently to desire, is hardly that, but we all must bear the responsibility for our deeds, and Mr. Eliot cannot escape his for tempting so many disciples to that imitation which is sincere, but certainly not flattery, since it achieves only his obscurity without the charm.

New Weapons is a sincere collection of verse, without any particular depth but competent in its workmanship and with promise of development in its occasional flash of insight. But the work is cerebral rather than emotional and poems are not made by taking mental pains.

Sincerity is a quality which can be present in bad poetry as well as in good. In itself, while praise-worthy, it is not an indication of poetic quality. Only when it is a sincerity of true emotion (the most difficult of all sincerities to a poet sitting calmly in his study) does it confer quality. For then it is obviously the result of a subjective agony of introversion which has made the imagined real. *The Shaken Reed*, by John Presland (Marsland, 5s.), has this sort of sincerity, or reality, which compels one to read it from cover to cover. Beginning in a *vers libre* which is anything but enticing, its curious bareness of narrative carries one past and beyond the inevitable reaction into a state of mind where it no longer matters whether it be poetry or not. The book, containing one poem only, is a narrative of sorts, or rather a spiritual philosophising upon a theme of jealous love with a tragic end, and is written in a diversity of forms and metres which suit excellently the phases of its development.

> "A party is in progress
> in the old Georgian house,
> young men and girls have gathered
> in a lofty first floor room
> which is denominated studio;"

This is a quotation of the opening lines, and its unpretentious matter-of-factness is a significant beginning for what soon becomes both musical and poignant as only the musical can.

> "There are ghosts everywhere: ghosts in your gaze;
> ghosts on your lips that meet me with a smile;
> ghosts that companion all our waking days;
> ghosts in the quiet of our common bed,
> coming between us, till, when I would seek
> to touch the downy freshness of your cheek,
> these loathsome incubi I find instead,
> these ghosts, these memories of other ways,
> of loves now dead."

Mr. Presland does not intrude himself into this book, but only the emotions proper to his theme and by that test he has given us a poem of rare quality.

Another unobtrusive poet is Patricia Wentworth whose *Beneath the Hunter's Moon* (Hodder & Stoughton, 5s.) is a volume in the romantical vein, sometimes a little sentimental but not often, and consistently musical and classically correct. The work is however light in quality, if good of its kind, having little more than a troubadourish note uncomplicated by the deeper emotions.

In some contrast is *The Alien Wood*, by James Turner (Cambridge University Press, 2s. 6d.). This is much more sensitive, and still classical if not so tuneful, but there is no doubt which is the greatest of these three. Mr. Turner broods, and writes sometimes from depths of introverted dreaming, although he has not always resisted the mental impulse and the temptation of the attractive idea.

We would quote his own words, as true also of poetry:

"It is not in this hour
I am created
But in the outer darkness
Which is thresholded by light,"

but there is a quality in his work which tells us that the author knows this and that he must learn to wrestle with his mind and subdue it.

Dr. J. Sackville Martin is a frequent contributor to this Review and his book, *A Garnered Sheaf* (Stockwell, 3s. 6d.), contains much with which we are already familiar. The work is sensitive and sincere without any pretension to emotional depths but excellently fashioned and finished.

The title of the next volume, *Songs of Faith*, by G. W. Briggs (Oxford University Press, 3s. 6d.), is certainly not belied by its contents. The devotional note is insistent all through, and the verses, described as hymns not meant to be sung, are much what one expects in such things. Our business is with their poetical not the religious aspect, and in our view Canon Briggs does not, with this book, add materially to the religious poetry already written. It is probably impossible, and certainly unlikely, that anyone may make a confession of faith in so uncomplicated a fashion as this and achieve poetry. The author's method is much too direct to be more than a spiritual exercise in verse of obvious sincerity and unexceptionable skill.

The Time Piece, by Frank Kendon (Cambridge University Press, 5s.), is the sort of poem which seems to address the author as well as the reader, making them one in the thrall of the same mood. This is a restful and an invigorating experience, peculiar only to good work in a world where one is addressed by the other fellow (the author) so often and so cleverly. Mr. Kendon listens as we do, and to the same simplicities of earthly things, thinking thoughts for both of us in a poem, not too long with some seventy pages, sometimes rhymed and sometimes not, but all easy with the beauty of exceptional competence. The poem is like a long, lonely country walk wherein we observe and sometimes ponder, drawing conclusions and inferences when we feel like it or they occur to us. To read it is less effort but quite as pleasurable as the excursion itself:

"You should wander once from your snug bed of custom
Cheat the body of sleep for wherewithal
To estrange yourself. Rise, and clothed in silence,
Turning away from reasonable companion,

Tread the midnight stairway, feel your way
In dark ignorance over familiar boards.
So step from the unsuspected jail, and, loosed from comfort,
Meet the cold wave of manless moonlight alone."
Here is that world we outlawed for our peace,
A thought too mighty, too untimely minded
For us to bear more glances than we must."

A sufficiently cogent course to put one *en rapport* with Mr. Kendon's and our own world. Who, reading this, does not feel once more the remembered thrill of old experience, when we seemed more nearly a part of nature than was consistent with our reluctant egotisms. There could be no better recipe than this for inducing the proper mood for an identification of oneself with nature.

Mr. Christmas Humphreys' poems, of which a further selection, *Shadows*, is published by The Favil Press (5s.), are always distinguished by an unexpectedness of feeling and expression which makes them unusually acceptable in a world where the unexpectedness is mostly self-consciously mannered and neither lucidity of expression nor depth of feeling are regarded as the proper substance of poetry. It matters not, however, in what manner a man may write, whether traditionally or otherwise, if he be endowed with individuality; nor is it important that in substance there can be nothing original under the sun. In the images employed in expression there is still an infinity of variety, an inexhaustible reservoir of novelty, and it is in the felicity with which Mr. Humphreys is helped to this abundance that he owes that distinction which we have noted. This is what gives his work that undercurrent of emotion which hides the technical skill, blending it in, indeed, effortlessly, so that the one enhances and renders more significant the other. He has understood, where so many fail, that poetry is not a thing of the intellect, that it is

"Beyond the barriers of reason
Beyond the farthest margins of the mind
Beyond thought, for thought is limited."

And he has understood, too, a lesser truth, but still an important one, that much is gained and nothing lost by simplicity, lucidity and beauty of presentation.

The literary person, adventuring into verse, is apt to mistake the occasion; and when the verses are recommended on the strength of the author's success with essays and novels there would seem to be a serious misconception of the nature of these things. We do not regard them as related, save very distantly and by reason of a common use of words. Poetry is so fundamentally a thing of the soul that it disdains even to be called an Art, and nothing is more repellent in poetry than a literary, that is, a consciously artistic approach. *For To-morrow*, by Baroness Von Reitzenstein (Favil Press, 4s. 6d.), exhibits this literary quality in its usual uninspiring fashion.

A new book of poems by Edith Sitwell is, of course, an event in a bedevilled and quarrelsome world. There are some minds which work always in the aura of the spirit, whose thought is obedient to the perceptions and authority of the emotions, and whose words are for that reason as far removed from sentimentality as austerity is from gush. In *Song of the Cold* (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.), Miss Sitwell disports herself in

many moods but always with vigour, with freedom and with point. It is unnecessary but nearly unavoidable in these days to remark of so well-known a poet that she is lucid. Edith Sitwell writes with as much simplicity as may serve the subtlety of her thought, and certainly condescends to no subterfuge of incoherence, saying her say with an ease which the richness of her vocabulary might well have embarrassed. The explanation lies in her complete sanity, the result of the subjection of her mind to the spirit. When we hail her now as a champion against the subversive influences which mock us with the word "modern" we remember the ease with which the mind, unconditioned by influences more truly human, can become diseased and decadent; and how success can build a pride which is the father of folly. Yet in many of her techniques the author remains as modern as the best of them. Where she differs from them is in knowing her direction and in the beauty which she gathers by the way. And if she sees beauty in the harsh image it is no doubt because life is by no means all Alma Tadema but a grim business whose facts demand just that vigour of mood and mind which she gives us. Most of the poems contained in this new volume have already been published, many indeed in book form and, for that reason, are familiar; but in their rearrangement is justification enough for their re-presentation. We shall read them the better.

A first collection by Joshua James (John Lane, 6s.) called *Tarantell* is well-enough recommended on the dust-cover and on inspection certainly provides endorsement for some of the claims made for it. The author uses words for meaning and for beauty and rides his steed astride with a light rein maybe, and an unbloodied spur, but with a firm seat. So few people have a true individuality in their poetry, so many a mannered and studied peculiarity, that Mr. James if not unique is noticeable. For he has accepted his role, plays upon the instrument handed to him and seems not to care a hang for the result or, at any rate, to have but little care for it. One gets a taste of this attractive quality in a sort of near-sonnet, mustering fifteen lines, "Is the Kingdom of God like a Child?":

"Had you, like Faustus, sold your soul
For kingdom, bishoprics or flaxen hair;
Or to discover if the great sun be round,
Or if Greek Helen really was as fair;
Had you found happiness, or sated lust
The insatiable, or set another meteor in the sky,
Then was the bargain valid; but my friend
Merely to cover ribs and prise the chance
By dint of discipline to set some other slaves a dance,
You flood the market: when I look round I find
Inside this petty clerk with pinchéd knees
A void in place of an impetuous soul
Mined by the maggot Mephistopheles:
Better in the gutter whored
Than live respectable and bored."

An excellent creed for a poet.

A second volume from the winner of a poetry prize in the publisher's competition

is sent us by John Lane. *The Journey and the Dream*, by Hugh Popham (6s.) was, like the author's first book, written on aerodromes and on ships and is therefore, in some sort, another volume of War poems; but here is more of that sensitive, unegotistical and apparently unstudied poetry which has obvious authenticity, and sings, besides, with a strong lyrical note. Listen to—

"Now must perception falter
for all brief, lovely things;
the green horizons alter,
the white and crimson springs

in mist from hedge and hill.
Now that the pilot's eye,
beyond our knowledge, still
aims in a cloud-far sky,

no balance reconciles
the living and the dying:
only along the miles
the wind replying.

Now that their dark blood runs
where other blossom blows,
and under darker suns
our future goes,

well may we watch and weigh
the blood, the flower:
and know this is the day,
and this the hour." •

Mr. Popham has imagination and his images seem to flow living from him. In all his work there is artistry, but no apparent effort, as though he "lisped in numbers." But his chiefest merit is a diction which seems to us to be no matter of conscious selection, in its quiet strength and complete propriety, but the unpremeditated language of poetry,—

"The mountains behind
are clenched like a fist to the sky;
will you find
in that narrowing silence a pass
from the map to the mariner's glass,
from the tentative brain to the eye,
from the kiss to the Cross?"

There are, scattered through the pages, as here, occasional lapses from complete lucidity. This is a pity, for however arresting the offending phrase something of beauty is lost when meaning goes. One of the difficulties of the young poet is always this failure to compress into few enough words the abounding material to be expressed: and what seems clear enough to the creator is dark to the reader who is denied the knowledge of the poet's thought-processes which could have illuminated it for him. It is often, *per contra*, extremely difficult to recognise one's own obscurities owing to that same illumination in one's own brain, and we prefer to believe that Mr. Popham's have arisen from that natural myopia and from no love of mystery.

Douglas Gibson on the dust-cover of *Winter Journey* (Cape, 6s.) says that he tries to express, as simply, clearly and musically as he can, the emotions; and that all his poems start from the heart. This is an excellent endeavour and a worthy claim. Indeed a poem can start from nowhere else and emotion is its mainspring. And yet we were not greatly impressed by this volume, and our own emotions were not noticeably aroused as they would have been had Mr. Gibson more faithfully taken his own prescription. There is too much evidence of subsequent cerebration, after the

coronary start, and even in one place (a small matter doubtless) an example of a technical difficulty unsurmounted:

"In this small world
New life did spring;
Took colour, form,
And eager wing.
Took wing and went
Through summer sun;
In other worlds
New lives begun."

Grammatically, surely, the last word should have been "began." Still, to be pernicketty no longer, these poems strike us as unimportant, being slight in texture and weak in their emotional quality, as though a too conscious search for delicacy had damped a fire which might have blazed.

Quite a different sort of thing is another from Jonathan Cape, *The Granite Island*, by Robert Payne (3s. 6d.). The poems are stated to have been written in China during years of isolation through war, but most of them might have been written anywhere, since there are warlike themes which have a world-wide topicality. Here again is vigour and a clear-cut emotion which is beautiful inherently and by no artifice. Not everything written here seems to have expressed itself without rehearsal, but there are several poems which have an impromptu air which qualifies them for praise. From "A Song for London" we offer a quotation,

"From evil let us turn
As the sun goes under;
Dancing, from dancing learn
The source of wonder.

The dams we closed at night
May like rope of silver
Open in the light
Of a green flowing river.

O shout the innumerable names
Of the dancers in the city;
St. Paul's is ringed with flames,
The dancers show no pity."

But even when the work seems more studied there is an atmosphere of vitality about it as though Mr. Payne wrote only when he was full of energy. Not that he rants or declaims, for decidedly he does neither. But he does express a faith and an optimism which if not itself the pure fire of inspiration is still fire and makes his poems well worth reading.

Oliver St. John Gogarty writes a foreword for a book entitled *Poetry of Nora Grace* (Cahill, 5s.), and from some dozen pages of critical analysis emerges her convinced admirer. We are glad to join him, not only because of our pleasure in reading his fine prose but as a proper tribute to a poet. Here, too, is work which comes recognisably from beyond its author—economical, sure and beautiful; and lit with its proper measure of high lights where we pause and blink. Describing a spring sunset she can say—

"And there a golden land doth stream
As the soul behind the eye."

And always her best lines have that easy, obvious simplicity which compresses so much into so little, and out-emphasises the most fervid flights. Mr. Gogarty notes with approval the absence of modernism in this lady, and when one has read her book one might well wonder why there is any such thing. For Nora Grace is, in her antiquated forms, as freshly beautiful as next spring's daffodil; and if anyone should

assert in your hearing that all has been said in the old way, and there is nothing left you may confidently refer him to this book. One more glimpse of her quiet beauty—

"The breakers furl in sunlit birth
Above the weary sand,
And then the tide slides out to sea
To seek a moonlit hand.

You feel the curving wave and know
Its ardor finds release,
And all your life has learnt the slow
And timeless curve of peace."

Winter Thoughts in Richmond Park

BARE is your head, tall tree, but marvellous
This tracery which Autumn tempests reap,
Graved deep upon the sky, untremulous
With the still beauty of your winter sleep.
Fall lightly now, my foot, for in this soil,
Matching the farthest twig, the hidden root
Wakes in the darkness to a winter's toil
Seeking betimes another summer's fruit.
Would that my roots might strike as deep in Earth
And find for me as sweet a constancy
To her who feeds me, too, who gave me birth
And, at the end, will claim the dust of me,
Not as a noisome thing to lie apart
But that her life may wake my sleeping heart.

H. W. Harding.

On Caer Caradoc

I FELT a spirit on the hill,
Its wide wings moved about my face.
Above, the air was quiet and blue,
And at my feet the winds of space
Moved gently into solitude.

I stretched my feeble arms and grasped
The fleeting body of the wind—
One instant—and my fingers clasped
The presence of all loveliness,
God's melting robes, the wind's white head.

Yet—as I held eternal dream
I turned—and found its beauty fled.

Marguerite Tudor Williams.

Dynamics of American Poetry: CX

David Morton is a Kentucky poet, and happily for the rest of us has written many worth-while and delightful poems. It is a popular thing on reaching sixty to gather together in one volume that which you wish to have survive, in this case *Poems*: 1920–1945 (Alfred A. Knopf). He is distinguished as an author, teacher and journalist. We enter the book by way of:

"Who walks with Beauty has no need of fear;
The sun and moon and stars keep pace with him;
Invisible hands restore the ruined year,
And time itself grows beautifully dim.
One hill will keep the footprints of the moon
That came and went a hushed and secret hour;
One star at dusk will yield the lasting boon;
Remembered beauty's white, immortal flower.
Who takes of Beauty wine and daily bread,
Will know no lack when bitter years are lean;
The brimming cup is by, the feast is spread;
The sun and moon and stars his eyes have seen,
Are for his hunger and the thirst he slakes:
The wine of Beauty and the bread he breaks.

Of such a nature is this man. . . . The book yields some 210 pages filled with such excellence. There is a touch of the mystic in many of these much-loved poems.

I was drawn to sending for Norman Rosten's *Fourth Decade* (Farrar & Rinehart) through reading a foreword of his in favour of a fellow-poet. Let us read what Mr. Rosten tells us of his approach to poetry.

"What I am concerned with most in my poetry is the external world and its action, for the beliefs and heroisms of that world are, finally, the sources of poetry. . . . Poetry is not an intellectual puzzle nor a bout with language." We learn that Mr. Rosten, while at the University of Michigan, received the Avery Hopwood Award in poetry and drama, and later a Guggenheim fellowship in poetry.

The book we are now considering is already in its second printing. The opening lines of the opening poem follow:

"Drinking out the towering twenties
drinking in the promising thirties,
. . . . . .
Everyone was pleasant
but without much to say.
Shadow of the lean years,
The house that bonds built
This is the time that tries men's souls."

A descriptive realistic picture Mr. Rosten gives us of the lean years:

"The unemployed move along the avenues
of the world with the pallor of waiting,
and no voice answers. They move onward
past the buildings where wealth shines
in good letters on its thousand windows.

These are the pitiful wanderers
who have lived innocently, committed no wrong;
now the famine and the locusts have come
and the winter is seven years long.

The decade of home relief
the decade of the apple vendor;
the suicide of the sensitive begins,
We learn the humiliation of hunger.

In the valley of the poor,
through the night, through the nightmare,
the hum of anger disturbs our sleep,
sends its tremors through the veins of earth
and the seismograph quivers.

We were born with the crisis on our eyelids
and are now called upon to answer questions."

One begins to think in reading of the pitiful conditions existing over the world to-day that Mr. Rosten might have spelled his Decade, *decayed*. Continuing in the same vein:

"Does the poster lie?
Is it true what it says about
me and J. P. Morgan?

Is it true we own the U.S.A.
together? I mean, if I have a job
am I really in business for myself?

Like J. P. I mean?

Is it everybody's country
or is the lady with the red, white and blue
giving me the one-two.

What I'm saying is:
Never mind how much J. P. owns—
how do I collect what's mine!"

Gazing at the magnificence of marble and fresco on the hushed halls of Congress this poet is not optimistic of our present leaders:

"But you are stone, and the giants are dead.
There is time here, always time.
There is debate in the democratic tradition.
The committees function for ever and ever,
recess and convene and recess and pause.
We are in the age of the little men."

Norman Rosten ends this splendid arraignment of the days that are, with:

"Believe, man and woman,
for history is the bed you sleep upon.

This is your death and your life;
it is your own son about to be born."

The second half of this most interesting book is named "Ballad of Bataan" (a poem for radio), written for and first produced by the United States Treasury Department on May 5, 1942, with Alfred Lunt as narrator. It was repeated later that year by Orson Wells over the National Broadcasting and Columbia Broadcasting networks, with subsequent performances in army camps, USO centres, schools, and radio stations throughout the country.

For those that believe in happy marriages, *All Our Lives*, by Henry Wise Miller (Coward-McCann, Inc.), written about the life of Alice Duer Miller and Henry Wise Miller, is a delight. To the unhappily married it is a lesson. This reviewer unhappily only very briefly met Alice Duer, but became immediately aware of the marked power this lovely woman possessed to attract to her men and women in all walks of life. Very well said are the following lines: "But *All Our Lives* is much more than a biography. It is really a portrait of a marriage."

Immense interest was aroused during World War number two by *The White Cliffs of Dover*. Notable is Noel Coward's comment on this book: "I should imagine that even a Hottentot, providing he had a reasonable knowledge of the English language, could not fail to be impressed and touched by the sincerity, quality and charm of this book."

Of course, all the good and the great this distinguished couple knew, but I am going to talk about their knowledge and love of cats. Quoting from midway in the book, Mr. Miller says: "Cats played a great part in our life. Alice idolised them. I don't know how many cats we had altogether, but for some thirty years there was always one in the house. Dulcinea, Julian (the Apostate), Helena and Mr. Lemon, a splendid creature, who wasn't really ours; great beauties, but more remarkable for their looks than their brains."

Suppose we read one of the many poems that Alice Duer must have written about cats:

"Julian, my cat, is very proud,
And so genteely bred,
He never learned to mew out loud,
But mews inside his head.

Whenever strangers come to call,
He either leaves the room,
Or turns his back upon them all,
Sunk in a furry gloom.

He chills them with his stately air
If they attempt to touch;
The lions in Trafalgar Square
Have influenced him much.

But when the crowd has gone away,
And midnight lamps are lit,
Julian becomes extremely gay,
And has a silly fit.

And springs upon me unawares,
Goes mad about a spool,
And dangles from the backs of chairs,
Behaving like a fool."

Concerning poetry we read: "Alice was one of the few people I have ever known who read poetry as easily and constantly as prose. There was not a period of English poetry with which she was not familiar. Thin volumes of modern verse lay on every table of her library and the book-stand by her bed held only Matthew Arnold and

Shakespeare. . . ." Born in July 1874, her first poems appeared when she was twenty and life was first unfolding. Eighteen years later the suffrage campaign and the first war brought two more collections. Twenty years after that, a time to her of great distress and the crisis of the war, produced first one and then the last of her poems: "I made up my mind to say everything I thought about England. I had no idea on which side of the ledger I was going to come out. I was like the children of Israel. You remember Moses came back and found that they had made a graven image and he scolded them for it, and they answered, rather weakly, 'that they had cast the gold into the fire—and it had come out this calf.' Well, so I cast all my thoughts and feelings into the fire, and it came out—*The White Cliffs*." *The White Cliffs of Dover* found a wide and sympathetic reading public and a much-sung song was born of it. Mrs. Miller's death on August 22, 1942, robbed a great circle of loving friends of a presence they cherished.

I had not happened to see any poetry of David Russell's until *Sing With Me Now* (Kaleidograph Press), his last book, reached me. Shakespeare said a few good things, one that is in my mind now runs as follows: "All things are ready if the mind be so"! Now here was I worrying and wondering how I could describe the human mind, which, to my way of thinking, has never fully been done, and when we acquire the accumulated force of this mind in the direction of betterment, the millennium will be at hand. How may this be done? How harness these many minds? Well, here is Mr. Russell's talk about the human mind, of which I will give six stanzas:

"Look long, look deep and you will find
No wonder like the human mind
That can within its cradle hold
The nameless new, the ancient old,
The alien distant and the near
All safe within its pulsing sphere.

Above, beyond the bound of things
The human intellect takes wings.
Space is its dwelling and its throne;
There are no arcs it has not known,
No bright parabolas at all
But safely in its pattern fall.

Time is its slave. All yesterdays
But mark the progress of its praise.
This present moment is the spark
It lights within the circling dark,
A spark whereby all men may see
Conclusion and bright prophecy.

What is its substance? Lifted flame
Too fragile for a man to name,

All potencies and powers combined,
Unmeasured still and undefined,
The essence of creative might
That stands defiant in the night.

Intangible as faith, as fair
As sun-irradiated air,
As personal as blood or bone.
And yet no man can call his own
The miracle that out of space
Has made his dust its dwelling-place.

He can but scan the outer part
Of its impenetrable art
That bends all earth to his commands,
Earth and far uncreated lands
Whose beauty can alone be caught
Within the universe of thought."

And again quoting let us enjoy the first stanza of "When Music Speaks":

"When music speaks the world stands still to listen,
Breathless to catch within the sensate being
Those bright cascades that rise and fall and glisten
As sound were sight and tone were meant for seeing."

Here we have a poet of full stature.

A letter from Mr. Russell brings, at my request, a treatise on poetry entitled *To-day Demands Its Song*. Mr. Russell writes, "I have great faith in the power of song. As the poets rediscover their ability to sing, I honestly believe that they will find a wide audience awaiting them. I am one who believes in the high power of poetry to be a dominant and vital factor in the lives of men, that sincerity of emotion, melody in form, are the three primary requisites of great poetry." Mr. Russell is President of The Poetry Society of Texas, a very going concern.

George Cox, author of *Nature and Art*, Engravings and Verse (Bruce Humphries, Inc.), was born at Cheltenham and is a graduate of the Royal College of Art, London. For many years he travelled and studied in Europe before and after coming to America. He is now chairman of the Art Department of the University of California; also he is the author of several books on art and has contributed many articles to widely known magazines throughout the country. Of his poetry I speak with admiration in this beautifully done volume of some eighty pages; of his illustrations my knowledge of *l'art moderne* is insufficient for me to judge them. They are, however, receiving much appreciation. Let us read his first sonnet, "Nature and Art":

"Two loves bewitch me still—Nature and Art—
twin maids so unalike, each set apart,
the virgin mothers of all visual song,
unravished brides no man may know for long.
One constant, holy, effortless, and right,
fecund, unashamed, and spendthrift of delight,

who bears all fleeting beauty, night and day,
yet asks no tribute paupers cannot pay.
The other, often barren, weak, and wrong,
laborious, slow, and to all lovers long,
bears ageless glories in uncertain ways,
yet taxes all who serve with bitter days.
One brings deep peace; one leads to inward strife—
yet how tell which dear love lends more to life?"

And the next, "Autumn":

"Season of garnered fruits and Harvest Home,
crowning the sentenced branch with golden wreaths,
the tender pathos of your hours are strung
between cool morning mists and frosted eves.
Though your full music has a dying fall,
it tames hot Summer to a gentler phase,
and your bright fires, consuming wood and moor,
burn but to temper Winter's frigid ways.
Reluctantly you bid the swallow south,
decking tranced hedgerows with a kindly hoar,
slowly release the sere and yellow leaf,
listening, until the robin sings no more.
Then, still serene, you wait November's greys
that shall enshroud you with remembered days."

Touching is Mr. Cox's expression of the "brave lads," "The Salient." The illustration which accompanies this is eerily discernible; a cross with a G.I.'s cap resting on it and "Unknown" on the cross bar of the cross.

"Here lie brave lads, laid low ere life began,
beneath fair weeds that smile into the sun.
On whose long buried hopes are roots now fed;
whose ardent blood turned these soft petals red!

What sacraments were kept, what guerdons lost,
what wealth of promise into discard tossed;
what agonies exhaled with evening mist
when the slow worm once eager lips first kissed!

Yet magic alchemy no eye may see
works here, that everlasting life may be,
for tears that on lorn maiden's cheeks did start
may dew the honey stored by lovers' hearts.

Thus man's unconquered valiant dust distills
gold grain in ranks that destiny fulfills,
as aged and young and babes not yet conceived
shall take such sacrament—until reprieved.

Then all return to Earth, where no pain grows,
though flesh be lent to nourish thorn or rose,

and storied fields, that lived and loved anon,
shall hear Spring's bugles, though brave lads pass on—

Hark now—in tender grass and ancient tree—
the splendid promise of their life to be!"

Mr. Cox's appreciation of "The Sculptor" ends with this couplet,

"Thus art shall keep what time must take away,
saving thy beauty from the grave's decay."

This book is an interesting milestone on the way of joining two arts through one artist's mind.

Let us look at the road by which Robert Nathan has travelled since his birth in New York City in 1894. Educated in New York and abroad, at Phillips Exeter Academy and Harvard University, where he became an editor of the Harvard monthly. In the pages of this magazine his first stories and poems appeared, and now we learn there are 26 volumes of poetry and prose from his pen.

His poem on Dunkirk, included in *The Darkening Meadows* (Alfred A. Knopf), has made a deep impression on many readers. In the simple phraseology Mr. Nathan has applied in his story of Dunkirk lies perhaps the strength of the poem.

To the South Americans is an interesting poem, and it calls upon the mind to consider the remote possibility of the unity of peoples, dissimilar:

"Our hearts are not the same; their separate speech,
Sweet on one tongue, can wry another's mouth.
We in the north have a pine taste; we reach
For homely wood. You poets of the south
Have the tall palms, the coral coloured shore,
The rubied mango, soft as sleep within;
Our fruits are cool of flesh and hard of core,
They have a wine of winter in their skin."

Frederick Mortimer Clapp, poet and director of the Frick Collection, in answer to my request for a paragraph relating the art of painting to poetry, writes me:

"You are kind to write me about a possible article on the relation between paintings and poems. Much has been said, as you know, on that subject and very inconclusively. I fear I could not add anything of interest, for the interrelation of the arts is so bound up in the problem of the nature of perception, conception and the object-subject complex that one never seems to get anywhere in discussions of this kind. The terms are undefined and substance dealt with undefinable. More than that, don't you think, each age lives in its own emotional cloud, and unless we are able to say what is really good and durable—a feat never achieved by contemporaries—we cannot discover how the excellent in either art is related to the other.

"In these days pictorial art is highly subjective, it avoids transcribing the seen world. It rejects it. Forms arising from unpredictable associations in the supposed underground emotion-stream are its preoccupation and material. But even so artists of a modern type would hate to have their pictures called poems. Perhaps there are two divergent sensory-motor activities involved, trains of impulse going down quite different tracks in totally unlike technique. I distrust the hybrid.

"All of which is pretty vague and I find no key fits the lock. If I had even fragments of time some other notions might come to me, but I am too buried in work to undertake anything outside especially after these war years without any vacation."

Edith Tatham, following on my review of her latest book, writes me: "Once upon a time I was a writer of prose—fiction, sketches, historical articles—and I was a singer. Later, I lost my singing voice. But there was undying music in my soul, and through God's beautiful love of compensation I began to write poetry. Now I write only poetry, and sing through my verse. The world needs music—it needs poetry. Those who can should do their utmost to furnish it."

Loyd Haberly similarly writes me from Washington University, Saint Louis, Missouri: "I was very happy to have your commendation of my little book, *Silent Fame*. Defining poetry is harder than writing it. What I try to do is to distil experience and set it to music. With many thanks and best wishes."

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

TO THE EDITOR

POETRY IN EDUCATION

A decade has passed since my last article appeared on Poetry in Schools. In a wider experience I would venture to express the supremacy of the art in the school of mankind. Quite recently I have had the task of coaching a group of adolescent girls in dramatic work, only to find them sadly lacking in appreciation of the poet, though their principal job was the ballet, through which one would have surmised that the need of rhythm ought to have revealed the merits of poetic construction. I accepted the challenge, beginning work in an unpropitious atmosphere, and entered into an explanation of the necessity of rhythm in the common round, whether breathing or walking, swinging or swimming, just as much as in the dance. I showed how a child tapping his feet on the floor or making his "goo-goo" sounds illustrates the argument. But when the mother dangles him on her knees and soothes him with Dickory Dock or some similar rhyme, the little one's joy is complete. From these simplicities I passed on to oratory, in making it apparent how natural it is for the speaker in his high emotion to use the "iambic measure," so increasing the effect—in the rough, of course, but decisively.

"I say—to all—present here—in this hall—the world—must have—
the prin—ciples—of truth—and just—ice re—cognised, etc. etc."

Examples in other metres served to produce effects suitable for the particular emotional urge, the while insisting on rhythm as the prime factor.

Proceeding steadily in the demonstration, I next asked the pupils to whom the ruling councils of men turn in heroic or tragic moments but to the poet. Note how often were the quotations from Binyon's poem on the memorial stones erected to the fallen after the 1914–18 conflict, "They shall grow not old as we that remain grow old." Then I bade the class bear in mind—two or more of the teaching staff were now attending regularly—that emotion and not reason is the source of most of our actions, and consequently the feelings needed directing that the "taste" should

be worthy of a cultured people. "But why is poetry so often dry and verbose?" came the request.

I pointed out that Brahms and Bach were dry to many who loved music, that some poets were dry only because they demanded *brain* in the reader, and that the highest in any and every art demanded a certain profundity of intellectual penetration. Yet I granted there was much verse only slightly removed from prose, entirely devoid of *ecstasis*. As for verbosity, one could safely deny that in general the poet used a superfluity of words. On the contrary, he told in brief what would occupy pages of prose to relate with nothing like the same effect. One has only to recall the line, "Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn" for this truth to be admitted. Or again, take the simple poem: "The Three Fishers." How were it possible to describe in prose the three scenes of (*a*) the departure, (*b*) the concern, (*c*) the culmination, in fewer than tenfold the number of words and even then with the loss of every trace of exaltation?

The values of repetition, alliteration, amongst other influences in technique were not forgotten. Unfortunately, I contended, rhetoric had no place in the hurry and scurry of modern education where the be-all and end-all of the system meant preparation for the School Certificate, and few the readers capable of expressing the manifold shades of emotion satisfactorily, so that perforce we had to rest content with a lugubrious radio voice, the mere assumption of which was thought efficient for the purpose. Frequently the poet himself, fired to creation of a lovely poem by his delicate spiritual conception, fails utterly in his monotonous chant.

If I do not agree with all Mr. Buxton writes in his latest admirable little book, I submit that he comes near the truth when in dealing with Dante, Milton and Goethe, and their genius, he proceeds to the declaration that

> "Each poet gives us . . . a connected view of the age in which he lived . . . conceptions which for generations have been accepted as underlying all civilised life . . . that the life of man is a good not an evil, and that it has a purpose, a goal towards which we ought to strive: that there is a spiritual world, independent of Man but to which he is related; its laws create fixed standards which he can discover, of Goodness, Beauty and Truth, by which his works and institutions, including governments are to be tested. . . ."

Can it be doubted, I would add, that the poet prefaces the politician in observing disunity in his ideal of the community, and in this is the unacknowledged legislator, the prophetic seer. In his genius he gets himself in tune with the spheres, strings his lute accordingly, and does not even have to strive (except for technique) to express his perceptions.

> "His and not his are the lays — Is his and not his; and the praise
> He sings; and their fame — And the pride of a name."

The philosopher in his abstractions goes astray repeatedly, but the poet out of the fullness of his feelings plunged into the vortex of "this spiritual world," never forgets that the human is a vital organism unerringly related to spirit, and hence in his knowledge becomes the interpreter bidding us recognise again and again that

> ". . . unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how poor a thing is man."

Lowell exclaimed:

"And I believed the poets: it is they
Who utter wisdom from the central deep;
And listening to the inner flow of things
Speak to an age out of eternity."

O. CHANNON COLLINGS.

REDWOOD ANDERSON AND MILTON

I should like to thank Miss Elizabeth Myers for writing so admirable a letter as that in which she brings to bear, in defence of a present-day poet—Redwood Anderson—an armoury of clear thinking, sense of proportion, and much else that is necessary in argument. Whatever opinion may fasten itself upon the reader's mind at the end of it, there can be no doubt of Miss Myer's ability to parry, thrust, and possibly throw her adversary into at least temporary confusion.

Since before the Milton-Anderson controversy arose at all, however, I was struck by the comparison made by Miss Myers (in her essay) between the descriptions of Eve offered by these two poets. And I thought—is it the case that Milton's lines are touched with an "indoor tapestry-stuffiness"? Surely not! The exquisite modesty of the description, the cunning word-magic, and the seeming effortlessness, render these four lines vivid to-day in the way Botticelli's "Primavera" for "Venus Rising from the Sea" live on with the simple permanence of great Art. Incidentally, does not Milton's portrait bring to mind Botticelli's "Venus" immediately? It was not for nothing that Milton visited Italy.

While delighted to witness so spirited a defence of Redwood Anderson, I cannot say that "hair's luxury," or "bright-foamed upon the grass" make any strong assault on the aesthetic sympathies. A little reminiscent of very early Keats, perhaps? The point I would make is that all the time, in the Milton passage, one is aware of powers held in reserve. The poet knew what to give, what to withhold, and yet—or therefore—he hits the sense with a very perfect bit of blank verse.

Miss Myers is commendably right to ask: "What! Is Milton never to be allowed to nod? Does he always 'mouth it well'?" But it is worth remembering that, as John Drinkwater indicated in his book, *Victorian Poetry*, while comparing the styles of Milton and Tennyson—Milton noddest remarkably seldom. As a craftsman (as distinct from bouts of the highest inspiration) he is unquestionably the most consistently fine of any poet who has used the English tongue.

Stroud, December 28th. ARTHUR BALL.

AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

(IN REPLY TO "INTELLIGENTSIA")

In earlier days, what satires ran
Against the gay Bohemian!
Dickens' waistcoats, Shelley's hair,
The shocking ways of Baudelaire
All got the staid Victorian goat—
And even more, the stuff they wrote!
And still the dismal Philistine
Lifts, as of old, his nasal whine

Against the socks, the pants, the hair
Artists (when out of khaki) wear.
Yet—last and most enormous shame—
They go on writing just the same!

JOHN SIBLY.

MR. HERBERT READ'S POEMS

Mr. Astore of Romford has expressed surprise that in my article, "Portrait of the Artist as an Anarchist," no mention was made of the one poem of Read's that *is* great, "Song for the Spanish Anarchists." "Also," said Mr. Astore, "no mention was made of his probable second-best, 'Bombing Casualties.'" It was not my object to establish which was Mr. Read's best and which his second-best poem. In an article of three thousand words or so the writer must confine his illustrations to examples which bear directly upon his thesis. In any case I am suspicious of the critic who speaks in terms of "best" and "second-best" poems, as if literary judgments could be made in the snappy-catch-answer fashion of the Brains Trust. It is asserted that "Song for the Spanish Anarchists" is "great." Now "great" is a term usually reserved for the achievement of Homer or Shakespeare, or, at the very least, of Milton, say, or Keats. Such eminence has not been reached by Mr. Read the poet, as he himself would, I think, readily admit. But let us for the purpose of argument accept the localisation of the word in the sense in which Mr. Astore has used it: that disregarding Mr. Read's other work the poem "Song for the Spanish Anarchists" achieves the very highest level of poetry, and (deductively) that "Bombing Casualties" comes very near it.

It is easy to see what has led Mr. Astore to this judgment on "Song for the Spanish Anarchists." If one were writing a publisher's blurb about the poem the phrases, "has something of the quality of Blake's lyrics," "simple, sensuous and passionate" would slip easily off the pen. Here is the poem in full:

"The golden lemon is not made
but grows on a green tree;
A strong man and his crystal eyes
is a man born free.

The oxen pass under the yoke
and the blind are led at will:
But a man born free has a path of his own
and a house on a hill.

And men are men who till the land
and women are women who weave:
Fifty men own the lemon grove
and no man is a slave."

It is an attempt to achieve Blake's quality of simplicity plus; plus self-consciousness, careful alliteration and assonance. It is the difference between the emotion felt and

the emotion re-created. The first verse of Mr. Read's poem has a pleasing melody. But compare it with:

"When the voices of children are heard on the green,
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast
And everything else is still."

and the inferiority is immediately apparent. Blake's alliteration is an integral part of his thought; Mr. Read's is a carefully chosen effect. An apparent overall simplicity is betrayed by the adjectives "golden," "green" and "crystal." They make a pleasant sound and at a casual reading give a deceptive impression of "directness." "No hanky-panky here," says Mr. Read in effect, "lemons *are* golden and trees *are* green in colour." But this is surely far from poetry, or even good writing for, with the possible exception of "crystal," these words add nothing to the sense. Compare Shakespeare's use of "golden" in:

"Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust,"

with the obvious poeticism of "golden lemon." If Mr. Read were writing like Tennyson or Swinburne (I do not suggest there is any connection between these poets) one might judge his poem less harshly. But we are dealing with a lyric, intended to be simple and direct, and allegedly great. We must examine it further.

The first three lines of the second verse have no redundant adjectives. They say what they mean. But the whole effect is spoilt by the banality of the last line,

"And a house on a hill,"

which is the kind of ending one expects of a dance-tune "lyric." A more serious criticism still must be made of the poem as a whole. What real connection is there between the golden lemon growing on a green tree rather than being *made*, i.e. manufactured, and the main theme of the poem: that a strong man and his crystal eyes is a man born free? (And why, it may be asked in passing, a *strong* man, except that it is a convenient onomatopoeic monosyllable? It is the natural, freeborn man the poet has in mind, if one is to make sense of the poem.) This, I must insist, is not carping criticism. There is no divine afflatus here to plead suspension of an intelligent attempt to realise the emotion of the poem; nor is Mr. Read agreeing merely to play with words. He has made a serious bid for the main event; we cannot dismiss him as we would an also-ran.

As an illustration of the kind of criticism I am making I would like to quote three verses of a contemporary poem in which simplicity of diction has been achieved without banality or the use of redundant words. It is, however, far from being a "great" poem, and the poet's habits of thought and construction are different from those of the author of "Song for the Spanish Anarchists." I make the comparison between the use of words only.

"Here lies Michael of the small bone.
The pride of the lion has gone home.
God lend our England such a one. . . .

His breath as pure as the great oven of Mary.
He spoke to God with the tongue of a great bell.
They taste his humour at the centre of the world. . . .

Michael the Englishman of the small bone,
Simple and pure as water in a spoon,
God lend our England such a one."

As for Mr. Astore's second choice, the near-great "Bombing Casualties in Spain," this is no spell-binder, but poetic reportage in Mr. Read's more familiar manner. This again, in fairness to the poet, I will quote in full:

"Dolls' faces were rosier but these were children
their eyes not glass but gleaming gristle,
dark lenses in whose quick silvery glances
the sunlight quivered. These blanched lips
were warm once and bright with blood
but blood
held in a most bleb of flesh
not spilt and spatter'd in tousled hair.

In these shadowy tresses
red petals did not always
thus clot and blacken to a scar.

These are dead faces.
Wasps' nests are not so wanly waxen,
wood embers not so greyly ashen.

They are laid out in ranks
like paper lanterns that have fallen
after a night of riot
extinct in the dry morning air."

The poem opens, informally, with a statement, and this statement, sustained by simile, is elaborated to the final "extinct in the dry morning air." The moral is implicit, which is as it should be. But is it great poetry? I think not. Not only has Mr. Read failed to escape from the imagist conception of poetry (of stuffed-trout fame, *vide* Mr. Henry Treece), but he is here guilty of loose thinking.

From the children's eyes we are directed to their lips which were warm once and "bright with blood" (not a very good way of saying that blood flowed in them, since the mental picture invoked is of *external* blood); but it was blood "held in a moist bleb of flesh" (ugh!), not "spilt and spatter'd in *tousled hair*." The image becomes ludicrous, and in an endeavour to escape from it the mind jumps to consider the hair, which is what the poet meant it to do, because he is going to talk about it in the next stanza. It is unfortunate that in making the transition he has to write nonsense.

In the last paragraph we are invited to consider the children laid out in ranks "like paper lanterns that have fallen after a night of riot." Very tender, very pathetic. Children are in a sense as brittle as paper. But we are being tricked into a false simile, for it is the *extinction* of the paper lanterns that Mr. Read would have us dwell on. Perhaps, too, the poet may once have seen paper lanterns laid out in ranks "after a night of riot"; but this is a private association. The reader, caught in the cross-fire of "paper" and "riot" sees no such orderliness.

I could go on. There is much to criticise in the associations of words (like "gleaming gristle," for example, the "realistic," I-pull-no-punches, "Guernica" flavour of which

might be admirable in another context), but this letter is growing too long. I hope I have given Mr. Astore sufficient reason for my failure to recognise the greatness of the poem he has cited. This is not intended to be a personal justification, and certainly not an attack on Mr. Astore. I have used his letter merely as an opportunity for (I hope) disinfecting the critical atmosphere.

Emmanuel College, Cambridge. GEOFFREY MOORE.

THIS AUTUMN DAY

(Written on reading "This Sunlit Day," by Phillis Lyth, in the September number, 1945.)

I WOULD rather go when the work is done,
Not now when life is strong
With purpose and desire,
When the singing sun
With prodigal abundant fire
Burns in the veins of our becoming
And love is a flame
That laughs upon the name
Of night.

I would rather leave the light
And pass away
With the slow contented feet of day,
And duty done
Be blessed with brief oblivion.
For light and love
Have slumber and awakening,
And we that in the Autumn welcome sleep,
Serene and gloriously deep,
Shall waken splendidly
With Spring.

Christmas Humphreys.

ELASTICITY IN RHYMING

As regards Miss Skeat's remarks on rhyme she is, of course, too academic, and your Premium Editor's remarks are largely right. But he hardly goes far enough. Lyrical poetry may be written in unrhymed verse (even in "blank verse"), rhymed verse, or something betwixt the two. But free-verse (which is not metrical) should not be included, for it is not a successful medium for the lyric. It is more effective in satire. Free-verse has no relationship to blank verse.

The German lyrist Heine was one of the first who released his brothers from the fetters of exact rhyming. And I understand that assonance rhyming or half-rhyming was an important feature of Irish Gaelic poetry, while a modern who has been strongly influenced by this elasticity is the Irish poet, Austin Clarke. Even such a purist as Quiller-Couch was sympathetic, and in his *Oxford Book of English Verse* he includes

a long lyric by the Victorian, Scawen Blunt, which is not entirely without rhymes, as appears at first sight, but partly owes its music to the coinciding assonance of such words as: *sun, love; soul, own; latch, hand; life, wise; day, slain.* And Frank Kendon's well-known lyric "I spend my days vainly," rhymes *vainly, elate; musing, attuned; remoteness, blowing; sweet, seek.* Like Austin Clarke he has frequently experimented in this way. But Humbert Wolfe (who was partly influenced by Heine) did not so much experiment as help himself out with half-rhyming when he was in difficulties. So he rhymes *enough, love; possession, compassion; tamarisk, dusk;* and so on—generally pleasing and satisfying to the ear because of his metrical skill. There is only one law to observe: Don't *obscure* your meaning by an exact rhyme; don't be pedantic; have the courage to be makeshift if the content will not allow you to be exact.

Also, as regards another matter, Miss Skeat is not quite right. We generally spell "rhyme" when it means the *word,* but "rime" when it means a short jingling poem, i.e. "Nursery Rime."

As regards some remarks on the Sonnet in another part of THE POETRY REVIEW, elasticity is allowed even here. Rupert Brooke's most famous lyric, "The Soldier," is a sonnet with a Shakespearean octave and a Petrarchan sestet. Even Milton deviated, for he ends his fine Petrarchan sonnet on Cromwell with the hammer-blow of the Shakespearean rhymed couplet; and Wordsworth at least once did the same, for his sonnet "On the Sonnet," a magnificent burst of Petrarchan music, ends also with a rhymed couplet. A few of the best sonnets are combinations from two different traditions. And also, we must remember, there is such a thing as the Spenserian Sonnet, which has another rhyme arrangement.

St. Albans, Herts. HERBERT PALMER.

I still love THE POETRY REVIEW and read it from cover to cover with intense delight. We seem really to be in for a renaissance to my very old-fashioned liking. I most especially appreciate the reports of Herbert Palmer and your Premium Editor, and heartily agree with nearly all they write. The latter's reply to poor Miss Skeat is masterly. "Scientific accuracy of harmonious expression!" Pish, Tush and Humph twice! Actually I have a very sensitive ear for prosody and "rime" (I wonder if you know of anyone since Saintsbury who has scanned every line of Shakespeare, plays, poems and sonnets, except me!), and I can tell you that I never noticed either the false or non-existent "rimes" in Miss Jean Kenward's exquisite poem "Exequy," so real a poem that I never once thought of the rhyming. Is not that a fair test—especially as, with Kingsley, I have always, e.g. jibbed at Tennyson's rhyming of "blundered" with hundred?":—MALCOLM A. ROBERTSON.

In a world of doubt and ignorance, I appreciate THE POETRY REVIEW, which, in the scope of its knowledge, can entertain, encourage, enlighten, and edify all who read it: J. C. WARRINER, Bath.

I have never valued a present more than I did when given a year's subscription to THE POETRY REVIEW; it gives me the greatest pleasure to renew it on my own account: BARBARA J. WICKENS, Sevenoaks.

The Premium Editor's Report

The unavoidable delay in the appearance of the November-December POETRY REVIEW is responsible, I suspect, for the occasional submission of more than two poems per competitor, and perhaps for a more frequent failure to mark entries with the words "For Premium Competition." These errors and omissions have been overlooked this time but can be so no more. On this occasion I have considered only the first two poems where more were submitted and so was justice done. The competition generally struck me as well below our recent standard and I am wondering whether the enlargement of the pecuniary reward has operated to defeat an afflatus which has been called divine, or whether the declension is merely the result of the dullness supervening on peace.

Whatever the reason the entries proved disappointing, not in number but in quality, and among them all there was none which spoke with that compelling voice which makes choice easy, so that this time the prize must be divided.

There was much unfinished, or unpolished, work submitted. Inexcusable as this slack finishing is, it was more common than usual, almost persuading me that the late festivities were indeed responsible. The simple expedient of reading your poem aloud, refusing to force any syllable to an undue emphasis, should abolish even the risk of such fault, but it seems to have been too much trouble for many of our competitors to adopt. The obscurity, which eluded my powers of comprehension at times, is perhaps more difficult to correct unaided, but there is nothing in our rules against your enlisting a sympathetic and candid friend to try your poems out on. Some of you are, indeed, too free with words, or is it not free enough; too easily satisfied with a too far-fetched metaphor or too verbally economical for clarity. The only sort of poem which can possibly succeed is that which is crystal clear,—we being such creatures for wanting to understand and so resentful of effort. And comprehension is as fundamentally dependent upon an easy, a flawless, rhythm as upon language even. Yet how many ungainly periods or strophes have I been condemned to read, wherein my own bodily rhythms have been traversed and ruffled and my mind confused and blunted in consequence. It is quite certain that many of you have but a hazy notion of what poetry consists in. Primarily it is utterance in a measured cadence which is more exactly attuned to the physical senses than any other; and in the achievement of that insidious cadence no gleam of clarity should be clouded. Succeed in this and your reader will feel that instant shock of spiritual invasion, manifested in a subtle excitement, part sensuous, part mental, but mainly emotional, which we ascribe to inspiration. To effect so much, no doubt you need that ghostly aid, but nevertheless, you may still perfect yourself technically if you will not compromise,—becoming harder to please with your own work than anyone else. Poetry is not a pastime but a passion, and the Muse a mistress more jealously insistent yet more rewarding than any.

In the final adjudication I confess to compromising with my perplexity. To Miss Jean Kenward of Belfast I have awarded the largest share of the prize because I find more pure poetry in her poem than in any other, but Miss W. J. Griffiths of Wrexham, Miss W. V. Wall of Liverpool and Mr. C. E. J. Fryer of Maidstone run her close and are rewarded accordingly. And lastly I have been constrained to provide for a consolatory douceur to "Michael Delarche." The runners-up to this co-partnership of victors are as follows and in alphabetical order; but first, here is Jean Kenward's closely pursued winning poem:—

"To-day I heard the wind in firs—
Frost-bound and perilous the sigh
Of mariners in seas forlorn
Came faltering by.

I heard the creak of reedy mast
The luff and buffet of the sail
And knew how valiantly she sped
—A ship before the gale.

Deep underneath her keel lay
Shells whiter than the Pyrenees
Soothing with little salty cries
Dead lovers long at ease.

I saw her sailors slipping through
Waves greener than a lady's glass
Where jaunty crabs clung to their limbs:
'Alas,' they cried, 'alas,

That we who were so delicate
Should in the ocean's streaming hair
Be caught and stifled, never more
To breathe the thrushy air.'

Then as they wept a bird sang out
Suddenly changing foam to fir.
No vessel was there and no sea
Nor any mariner."

Highly Commended

Hazel Griffith Davis, Walton, Kansas.
Alice Lunt, Widnes.
Arthur Row, Hereford.

Commended

T. M. Auld, Twickenham.
Marguerite H. Bartlett, Cambridge, Mass.
Wilfred H. Bartlett, Calverleigh, Tiverton.
J. R. Clemens, Webster Groves, Mo., U.S.A.
B. L. McCutchon, Shirley, Birmingham.
Joan E. Dickinson, London, S.W.1.
Katherine Holehouse, Bramhall.
Cullen Jones, Fort Douglas, Utah.
Evelyn Lloyd, Cheltenham.
Thomas Morgan McGurk, Edinburgh.
Editha Melbourne, Maidstone.
Dr. A. C. Nash, Hollyburn, B.C., Canada.
E. Gordon Oxenham, Harrow Weald.
George Shiers, Southgate, N.
Muriel Spark, Helena Club, London.
Ernest C. Toye, Rugely.
Thomas Demarden Williams, Highgate, N.
Loie Worley, Wanstead, E.

The £10 at the disposal of the Premium Editor is allocated as follows: to Miss J. Kenward, £3; to Miss Griffiths, Miss Wall and Mr. Fryer, £2 each; and to "M. Delarche," £1.

Poetic Drama Competition Award

ONE hundred and eighteen plays were submitted for this competition, but this raises the question when is a play not a play? So many of the entries were lacking in the elements of dramatic construction. We had, therefore, to rule that, primarily, the plays must be stageworthy. High poetry alone could not qualify. Too many writers meandered on the well-worn slopes of Greek mythology and evidently failed to see the lively possibilities of themes of more vital and current conception. We sought in vain for a *Riders to the Sea*, or anything approaching its calibre. As we reached the end of our long reading—and each play was carefully assessed—our feelings were, oh for a Synge or an O'Casey with the fireballs blazing and rocketing across the heavens and showering upon us their golden rain of poetry and life. But can we English now compete with the native vigour and colour of the Irish tongue—its torrent, its fluting, its dreaming and its starlight? It is a drab, pin-striped, bowler-hatted world down here and we tread a grey and songless measure. There can be poetic drama in the life and speech of Bond Street, Ealing Broadway and Birmingham. But successfully to bring a poetic aspect of that life within the tightly compact structure of a one-act play requires a vision and a craftsmanship which cannot lightly be acquired. For those who seek to study and experiment with this difficult, but intensely interesting, form of writing we would refer them to such books as: *The Craftsmanship of the One-Act Play*, by Percival Wilde, *Play-Making*, by William Archer, *So You're Writing a Play*, by Clayton Hamilton. Probably none of these works are in print at present, but they will be available at many of the public libraries.

Having acquired the primaries of one-act play writing it is for the poet to move in his heart and turn his pen with music and fire. There are boundless opportunities in this medium and it is work well worth attempting. The possibilities of poetic drama have not yet been anything like fully exploited.

For the final adjudication we were most fortunate in securing the help of Mr. E. Martin Browne, who is at present running the successful and exciting series of poetic plays at the Mercury Theatre. The large entry was winnowed down to nine plays, and Mr. Browne's report, all the more valuable for its candour, follows:

Report by E. Martin Browne

Of the nine plays submitted to me as finalists, none was of outstanding merit. Few even of these authors had much idea of how to make a play, and none but the winner had any idea of how to make a playable character speaking in verse. Nor did any new-inspired poetry emerge: the flashes which occurred were all in the medium of past generations. To a seeker after poetic drama, the result was most depressing.

I award the prize to *Malvolio* as the most successful poetic play submitted. Running up, I place equally: *The End of All Flesh*, whose thought is alive and new, though it is barely a play and cramped into old-fashioned form, and *The Ribs of Argo*, which is a play and competent though at the second remove from a creative form.

The plays referred to are:

Malvolio, by Stephen Williams, London, N.W.3.
The End of All Flesh, by F/Lt. Frederick Scott Wills, D.F.C., Aldershot.
The Ribs of Argo, by T. B. Morris, Tetbury.

The Tears of Things

HERE are the tears of things, no more than this;
So much was sown, so little harvested,
Yet what we never held we should not miss.
I only know that your cold lips, cold hand
Will understand.

It was for nothing that I stayed behind,
The search and finding never was for me.
The glory now lies broken in my mind
And from the wreckage I recall too much
Your voice, your touch.

The planes slash at the silence left and right,
Like little ships they sail away, away;
The searchlights strike with swords across the night.
Courage and faith you knew, these still abide,
All else has died.

I ask no questions now, no one can tell;
No answer has been ever given me.
Both life and you have kept your secret well.
I bring you only this from all the years
Through vanity and vice, through sloth and fears,
The tears of things . . .

The tears, the tears.

Cynthia Palmer.

November Funeral

OVER a grey sea moved the mourners
huddled between faith and grief, slowly,
between the solid waves,
to discover the spade-carved walls, the passage
Moses divided for their history.

Between the purple guy ropes, the purple-grey ropes
one went before, so much beloved
Sorrow for weeping could not see the path,
stumbled, stopped on the verge:
one went alone, brass and flower-contained.

Over a grey sea walked the mourners
bowed, sinking in lamentation
under a sodden veil of sky, to speed him;
walking in faith on a solid sea,
on the opaque waves of sorrow,
on the huddled graves.

Margaret Howorth.

Misfortune

THE warmth and purple blackness of the dark,
the fragrance so peculiarly night's own,
enveloped me and held me
with a touch as light as thought.
Sense drifted, dreamed and drowsed deliciously,
and as I sank, a moth wing brushed my cheek
and brought me back.

In other lands, the night is brittle as black glass
crashed by a giant force beyond our sphere;
the splinters, catching the fire of the hidden sun,
throw lines of light up into the sky.
The air is acrid with a pungent, choking smoke;
the noise, as of a universe disintegrating.
Why am *I* spared—who dream and drown deliciously!

Vancouver, Canada. *Irene H. Moody.*

Retrospection

WE must forget the dream of our midsummer
Wherein we two were free to love each other.
And long no more for love's green meeting places
Where half hearts join, while time's black finger races
Towards the evening train, the dreaded parting.
We must not think of fields and swallows darting
Between domed trees grown still and dark as churches,
Whose steepled shadows slope across the grasses . . .

It was a fragment, a bright rainbow bubble
Blown from despair of life, escape from trouble,
The mirror of our own imagination,
A castle built on dry sands of frustration.
It is enough we learned in one short summer
A lifetime's love—but now the barebones winter
Has stripped the trees with skeleton-cold fingers,
And chilled the rose, although the essence lingers.

We must be strong, and when the spring's wild calling
Floods through our loneliness, instead of falling
Victims again to life's unsought designing,
Must shut our eyes and ears, ourselves resigning
Each day, by bitter day, to work's unending
Toll on our strength. By work and will unbending
Alone can we dispel the brief obsession
That we were, each for each, the sole possession.

Bolton. *Phoebe Hesketh.*